

# Marshal of the Soviet Union G. Zhukov

# REMINISCENCES AND REFLECTIONS

## VOLUME 1



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Translated from the Russian by *Vic Schneierson*
Designed by *Alexander Smirnov*

Маршал Советского Союза
**Г. К. Жуков**
ВОСПОМИНАНИЯ И РАЗМЫШЛЕНИЯ
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# FOREWORD

Marshal G. K. Zhukov's memoirs, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, won a wide readership at home and abroad, and occupy a special place among Soviet war memoirs.

Why the extraordinary interest in this book?

First of all, because it is profoundly patriotic, because it is wide in scope, and because it is objective in its depiction of historic events of which its author, an outstanding and distinguished Soviet military leader, was eyewitness and participant. Marshal Zhukov offers an interesting, and in its way unique, account of the highlights of the military history of the Soviet state, arousing the reader's lively interest and, indeed, his profound reflections about the past.

Like all memoirs, the book is autobiographical. The author tells us of his needy childhood, of his life as a peasant boy apprenticed when he barely turned eleven, of his service in the tsarist army, and then of his participation in the First World War. He also tells us how he, along with millions of other working-class and peasant lads, defended the Soviet Republic against counter-revolutionaries and foreign interventionists. He tells us how the Great October Socialist Revolution opened new, broad vistas for them; how it brought them wide opportunities and helped them develop their gifts and abilities in the later years of peaceful endeavour in which the nation built a socialist society. But the centrepiece of the book is the depiction of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people of 1941-1945.

Nearly a thousand books have been written by its participants about the operations and battles of that largest war in history. But Marshal Zhukov's memoirs are by right

ranked among the best. They give a more profound and a more panoramic view of the war and of its political, social, and military aspects.

Marshal Zhukov dedicated his book to the Soviet soldier. And that is understandable: the magnitude and grandeur of what Soviet soldiers had done in the war, their courage, heroism, and boundless devotion, their readiness to lay down their lives for the great ideal evoke a feeling of pure admiration and patriotic pride.

Having himself risen from the ranks, having gone through a soldier's severe schooling, Marshal Zhukov deeply appreciated the hard work of soldiers, officers and generals, and set a high value on their personal contributions to the success of any operation. At all times he maintained the closest possible contacts not only with commanders of Fronts (army groups) and armies but also with the front-line officers and men. This gave him a good knowledge of the sentiments, the morale, of his subordinates. This helped him control the troops and lead them to victory.

Marshal Zhukov describes the basic tendencies in the art of warfare, the course and progress of the fighting, the gradual perfection of the operational and tactical skills of generals and commanders, and of the political officers. The book contains a powerful ideological charge. It is a lesson in active and devoted defence of the socialist homeland. It prompts patriotic exploits in the name of the freedom and prosperity of the Soviet Union.

I knew Marshal Zhukov well. I first met him in early 1931 at the People's Commissariat for the Army and Navy, as we were getting new appointments. Georgi Zhukov was put on the staff of the Red Army's Cavalry Inspectorate, and I on that of the Combat Training Division.

Three months later, Zhukov was elected secretary of the Party bureau of all the Army and Navy Inspectorates. He had won the respect and affection of his mates, who saw in him a seasoned and knowledgeable commander and a staunch Communist.

During the year before the war we served together again, this time on the Red Army's General Staff—he as its chief and I on the staff of the Operations Division. Most deeply

etched in my memory, however, is our joint work during the war. We were both involved in the elaboration and conduct of a number of major strategic operations, including those of Moscow, Stalingrad, Kursk, and Byelorussia. Both of us had been in command of Fronts. Georgi Zhukov, in fact, had been commander of five different Fronts, and always in the most crucial war theatres. From August 1942, he was also Deputy Supreme Commander. Besides, we were both sent as representatives of the Supreme Command Stavka to key sectors of the Soviet-German front to coordinate the actions of various Fronts.

Many a sleepless night we spent together working on some assignment of the Supreme Command. We have sat side by side more than once, ruminating jointly on various urgent matters, and have worked on operations of different scale together with other officers and generals. And in each of these operations, to their pattern and content, he imparted a creative imagination and a spirit of novelty. For me, G. K. Zhukov was a brilliant, gifted general. He was a born military leader. In the constellation of Soviet generals who so conclusively defeated the armies of Nazi Germany, he was the most brilliant of all.

At all stages of the war, in strategic, tactical and organizational matters, Zhukov was always clear-headed and sharp, bold in his decisions, skilled in finding his bearings, in anticipating developments and picking the right instant for a decisive stroke. Making the most fateful of decisions, he was astoundingly cool and levelheaded. He was a man of extraordinary courage and self-possession. I have never seen him flustered or depressed—not even at critical moments. On the contrary, at moments like that he was only more forceful, more resolute, and more concentrated.

In October 1941, when the enemy was on the outskirts of Moscow, Joseph Stalin and Georgi Zhukov had the following curt exchange:

"Are you sure we'll hold Moscow? I ask you this with pain in my heart. So speak honestly, as a Communist."

Zhukov did not hesitate to reply:

"We'll hold Moscow all right. But we need at least two more armies and some two hundred tanks."

Here you see Zhukov's special military style—his faith in the strength and heroism of his troops, his confidence in the support the troops would get from the country, his trust in the indestructible spirit of the Soviet people.

That was why the Stavka sent Zhukov to the most crucial sectors of the Soviet-German front and why he never failed to live up to its trust. Georgi Zhukov was Marshal and four times Hero of the Soviet Union. But for him the highest calling of all was that of a Communist. He had been a member of Lenin's Party for fifty-five years, had complete and unwavering trust in it, and never failed to do its bidding.

I see the value of this book in its showing the Communist Party as having been the force that inspired and organized the victory over Nazi Germany. The book shows, indeed, that the Party's Central Committee skilfully supervised the activity of the State Defence Committee, as it did that of the Stavka, the General Staff, the chief and central administrations of the People's Commissariat for Defence, and the commands of Fronts and armies in the drive to heighten the capability of the Soviet Army and Navy.

The author demonstrates that the Central Committee kept track of all the key developments of the war, of the effort to build up strategic reserves, to align the structure of the Armed Forces to what was needed at various stages of the war, etc.

Marshal Zhukov's book was the first of the war memoirs to exhaustively and correctly cover the activity of the Supreme Command Stavka. The author stressed that the Supreme Command had followed the Party's line faithfully in all military matters. He showed the style and methods of the Stavka, took us to its sittings, demonstrated how it tackled the planning of campaigns and operations, and how it dealt with the Front and army commands. He emphasized its competence in dealing with all bigger and lesser issues. Perusing the book page by page one gets a clear picture of the motivations, organization and efficiency of the Stavka and of the skill and wisdom it showed in exacting the same efficiency from others. I wholly agree with Marshal Zhukov that the Stavka had managed to harmonize collegial and one-man leadership, the final say resting in all cases with the Supreme Commander. One can see from the author's account

heroism displayed in it by Soviet soldiers, of the traditions of the war years.

Some books have a short life, are read and discarded, consigned to oblivion. Marshal Zhukov's book will have a long life. As new generations rise, they will want to find out and understand how the Soviet people won so arduous a victory. And in this book, as in the memoirs of other prominent Soviet military leaders, they will find no few valuable answers to their question.

I want to conclude this foreword with Marshal Zhukov's own words, which I take from this book:

"I have always felt that I am needed by the people, that I am continuously in their debt. And that, if one reflects on the sense of living, is the main thing. My life is but a small example of the life of the Soviet people."

One can only envy a man who was so deeply aware of the link between his life and that of his people. His life and works are a model that deserves to be imitated.

Marshal of the Soviet Union
*A. M. VASILEVSKY*
Tnice Hero of the Soviet Union

September 24, 1977

TO THE SOVIET SOLDIER

## Chapter 1

# CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

It is rather difficult to recollect everything that happened in one's life at an advanced age. Time has erased from memory many things, especially those relating to childhood and youth. I remember only that which is unforgettable.

I was born on November 19 (Old Style), 1896, in a house that stood in the middle of the village of Strelkovka in Kaluga province. It was an old house, one corner of which had sunk deep into the ground. The outer walls and the roof were overgrown with moss and grass. It consisted of but one room with two windows.

My parents did not know who had built it and when. Oldtimers said it had once been the home of one Anna Zhukova, a childless widow. To comfort herself she had adopted a two-year-old boy from an orphanage who was to become my father. Nobody could say who his real parents were and my father, too, made no attempt to learn. It was known only that he had been left at the door of the orphanage at the age of three months, with a note attached, in which his mother asked that the boy be called Konstantin. Why the poor woman abandoned her child no one can tell. It was hardly because of a lack of maternal feelings, and most probably because of her dire plight.

Father's adoptive mother died when he was barely eight. He was apprenticed to a cobbler in the large village of Ugodsky Zavod. He told us that his learning boiled down to sundry household chores, to running errands, caring for his master's children and even herding cattle. After three years of this "learning" he went looking for a new place. In Moscow he eventually found a place with a shoemaker named Weiss who had his own shop.

I do not know the details, but from what my father told me, after the revolutionary events of 1905 he along with many other workmen was sacked and deported from Moscow for taking part in demonstrations. Ever since, to the day of his death in 1921, he stayed in the village, turning his hand to cobbling and farming.

My mother, Ustinia Artemyevna, was born into a poverty-stricken family in the neighbouring village of Chernaya Gryaz.

When my parents married, Mother was 35 and Father 50. For both it was their second marriage. Their first spouses died soon after marriage.

Mother was physically very strong. She easily picked up a 200-pound sack of grain and carried it for some distance. It was said she had inherited her strength from my grandfather Artem who would stand under a horse and lift it up on his back or take a horse by the tail and force it down on its haunches with one quick tug.

Our desperate poverty, with Father earning a miserable pittance by cobbling, made Mother earn a little extra by carting loads. She worked in the fields all spring, summer and early autumn, and thereupon went in late autumn to the district seat of Maloyaroslavets for groceries, which she carted to shopkeepers in Ugodsky Zavod. She never got more for a trip than a rouble or a rouble twenty, which, considering that she had to pay for her food and fodder for the horses, a place to sleep over in town, shoe repairs, etc., yielded an amount that was probably less than the alms beggars collected in the same time.

But there was nothing to be done. Such was the lot of the poor. Mother meekly bore this heavy lot to keep body and soul together, like many other women in our villages. Despite the cold and the mud the womenfolk drove out to Maloyaroslavets, Serpukhov and elsewhere, leaving their small children in the care of the old people, who could hardly move themselves.

Most of the peasants in our parts were poor. They had little land, and what they had yielded poor harvests. Farm work was done chiefly by women, children and old people. The menfolk earned something on the side in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other cities. Seldom did any of them return with more or less decent earnings. Certainly, there were also rich

farmers, the kulaks. They were quite well-off. They lived in comfortable, well-furnished cottages, had a yard full of cattle and poultry, and large stocks of flour and grain in their barns. Their children dressed and ate well and attended fine schools. These were the people for whom our poor folk slaved, working just for bread or fodder or seed.

Meanwhile we, the children of the poor, saw how hard our mothers had it, and grieved over their tears. And how happy we were to get a bun or a piece of gingerbread from our mothers when they returned from Maloyaroslavets. If a little money was saved and there were pastries for Christmas or Easter, there was no end to our delights.

I was five and my sister was getting on for seven, when a kid brother whom my parents christened Alexei was born. He was frail, and we feared that he would not live. Mother sobbed and said: "How can he grow strong when all we have is bread and water?"

A few months after giving birth, she decided to resume her carter's trade. Her neighbours tried to dissuade her, advising her not to wean the child from her breast as he was still very weak. However, if not for Mother's earnings, the entire family would starve. So she had to go. Alexei was left in our care. He did not live long, less than a year. We buried him in autumn in the Ugodsky Zavod graveyard. My sister and I, let alone Father and Mother, grieved bitterly and often went to his graveside.

That year one more misfortune befell us. The roof of our house caved in with age.

"We must get out," Father said, "or the house will collapse altogether and kill us. We can make do in our shed while it's still warm out-of-doors. Then we'll see. Perhaps someone'll put us up in a bath-house or hayloft."

I remember how Mother cried when she told us: "There's nothing we can do, children. Help carry our stuff over to the shed."

Father contrived a small stove for cooking and we took up quarters in the shed.

Father's friends came round for the "house-warming" and jokingly remarked: "Looks as if you couldn't come to terms with the goblins in your house and they chased you out?"

"What do you mean?" Father retorted. "They would have squashed us in our beds if I couldn't."

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Father's friend and neighbour.

"Can't think of anything."

"What's there to think about?" Mother intervened. "We'll have to sell our cow, that's all. And for the money we can buy logs for a cabin. If we don't do it now, summer'll be gone, and it'll be too late putting up a cabin in winter."

"She's right," the men said.

"That might all be true," Father said, "but the money we'll get for our cow won't be enough, and all we have besides it is our old nag."

Nothing was said. Everyone understood that for us the worst still lay ahead.

A little later Father managed to buy logs for a small cabin at a more or less passable price and partly on credit. The neighbours helped to bring them in and by November the cabin was up. We thatched the roof with straw.

"Never mind, we'll get along somehow. When we get rich we'll put up something better," Mother said.

On the outside the house looked worse than the others. The porch was nailed together of old warped boards and instead of window panes we had bits and pieces of glass. But we were all very happy that we would have a warm place in winter. As for the crowded conditions, as the saying goes, "to be crowded isn't to be burried".

In the autumn of 1902 I turned six. The winter, which came early that year, was a horrible time for our family. The crops had failed and we had grain to last only till mid-December. All that our parents earned barely sufficed to buy bread and salt and to pay the debts. We had our neighbours to thank for helping us out now and again with a pot of cabbage soup or porridge. The principle of helping one's neighbour was not an exception, but rather a tradition of friendship and solidarity that reigned among poverty-stricken Russians.

When spring came we fared better. The fishing that year in the Ogublyanka and Protva was especially good. The Ogublyanka was a small shallow stream badly overgrown with [illegible]. [illegible] stream, beyond the village of Kostinka and nearer to [illegible]

skoye, where several brooks drained into the river, the waters ran deep and larger fish could be caught. In the neighbourhood of our village and the neighbouring village of Ogub the stream teemed with roach, perch and tench, which we trapped mostly with baskets. On especially lucky days I could repay the neighbours with fish for their soup and porridge.

However, we boys liked fishing in the Protva, near Mikhalyovy Hills. The road there led through dense groves of lime-trees and lovely thickets of birch which abounded in strawberries and, towards late summer, in mushrooms. Folk from near-by villages came to these thickets to strip the trees of bark for their bast shoes which were known in local parlance as "the latest in checkered footwear".

The groves and thickets are gone: the Nazis chopped them down during the war, and after the war the collective farm brought the land under the plough.

One day in summer Father said: "You're a big boy, nearly seven. It's time you did something. When I was your age I worked as hard as a grown-up. Tomorrow you'll come out hay-making. You and your sister will rake and stack the hay."

I liked the idea; I had been out to the hay meadows before. Now, however, I knew I would be doing something useful. In fact, I was proud that I was now able to help my family. On the other carts I saw my playmates. They, too, had pitch forks in their hands.

I laboured with great zeal and was happy to hear the praise of my elders. But I overreached myself; my hands were soon covered with blisters; I was ashamed to admit it, though, bearing the pain as long as I could. Then the blisters burst and I could no longer work.

"Cheer up, it'll pass," Father said as he bandaged my hands with a rag.

For several days I could not handle the pitch fork, and only helped my sister stack the hay. My playmates snickered. But soon the blisters healed and I kept up with the best of them.

When harvest time came, Mother said: "It's time you learned to reap. I've bought a brand-new sickle for you and tomorrow morning we'll go out to reap."

For a time things went smoothly until misfortune again befell me. I wanted to show my worth, fumbled, and cut the

little finger of my left hand. Mother was terribly frightened, and so was I. Luckily a neighbour of ours, Aunt Praskovya chanced to be nearby. She applied a poultice of plantain leaf and tightly bandaged the finger.

Many years have passed, but the scar remains as a reminder of my early mishap at farming.

The summer of work was soon over. I had got the knack of the job, and also grew physically stronger.

The autumn of 1903 was close, and I was due to start school. Like my playmates, I was preparing for it, trying to learn the ABC from my sister's tattered primer. That autumn another five boys from the village were to start school with me. Among them was my bosom-friend Alexei Kolotyrny. Actually "Kolotyrny" was a nickname, for his real name was Zhukov. We had five families in the village by the name of Zhukov, and the only way we distinguished between them was by using the mothers' Christian names. We were known as Ustinia's, others as Avdotia's or, say, Tatiana's, and so on.

We were to go to the parish school in Velichkovo, a village a mile away, attended by boys and girls from the four villages of Lykovo, Strelkovka, Ogub, and Velichkovo itself.

Some of the children had satchels of which they were very proud. Alexei and I had hand-sewn burlap bags instead. I said to Mother that these were the kind of bags beggars carried, and I would not go to school with it.

"As soon as Father and I earn the money," Mother replied, "we'll buy you a satchel. Meanwhile, you'll have to make do with the bag."

My sister Masha, who was in the second form, took me to school. We had fifteen boys and thirteen girls in our form.

After making our acquaintance, the schoolmaster assigned us to our seats, placing the girls on the left and the boys on the right. I wanted to sit at the same desk as Alexei, but the teacher said that since Alexei did not know a single letter as yet and was small he would have a seat up front, while I was put at the back. After school Alexei told me he would try to learn the alphabet quickly so that we could sit together. But that never came to pass. He was invariably at the bottom

of the class and was often detained after hours for not knowing his lessons. Being a very docile sort of chap, he was never sore at his teachers.

Our schoolmaster was Sergei Nikolayevich Remizov, a fine person and an experienced teacher. He never punished anyone without reason and never raised his voice. He was respected and obeyed by his pupils. His father was a priest, a very quiet and kind old man who taught us scripture.

Sergei Nikolayevich and his brother, Nikolai Nikolayevich, a doctor, were atheists and attended church services merely for appearances' sake. The two brothers sang in the church choir. Alexei and I both had good voices and were included in the school choir.

All the boys from our village were moved up to the second form with good marks; all except Alexei, who despite our collective assistance, flunked scripture.

My sister also failed and stayed in form two for a second year. Our parents resolved that it would be better for her to quit school entirely and look after the house. Masha cried bitterly, arguing that she was not to blame, that she was not promoted because she had missed many lessons caring for our kid brother Alexei when Mother was carting. I stood up for my sister, stating that though the parents of the other children were also working, none of them took their children away from school, and that all my sister's playmates would be continuing school. Eventually, Mother gave in, making my sister very happy. I was also glad for her.

We were sorry for Mother. Though we were still children we knew that she was having a very hard time of it. Besides Father, who was in Moscow to earn some money, sent us very little, and that irregularly. Previously, he had been able to send us two or three roubles a month, but of late he would send no more than a rouble now and then or even less. The neighbours told us that everyone in Moscow was drawing paltry pay nowadays.

In late 1904 Father came home. My sister and I were happy and expected him to give us presents he had brought from the city. But our hopes were dashed. Father had come home after twenty days in hospital, following an appendectomy, and had had to borrow his fare home.

Father was respected by his fellow-villagers. They always heeded his advice. At village assemblies he usually had the last say. I adored Father and he spoiled me. Still, now and again he punished me for some fault, taking it out on me with his belt and demanding an apology. I was stubborn and no matter how hard he thrashed me I bit my lips and never asked for pardon.

One day he gave me such a flogging that I ran away from home and spent three days hiding in a neighbour's hemp field. Only my sister knew where I was. She kept my hiding-place a secret, and brought me things to eat. My parents hunted high and low for me but did not find me. Then a neighbour stumbled on me and took me home. Father gave me one more licking, then took pity and pardoned me.

I remember how one day, when Father was in a good mood, he took me to have tea with him at the tavern in the neighbouring village of Ogub. The proprietor, Nikifor Kulagin, the rich man of the village, also kept a grocery store. The menfolk and the young chaps were fond of congregating there to discuss the news, play a game of cards or lotto, or have a drop, whether there was occasion for it or not.

I liked having tea at the tavern with the grown-ups who told so many things about Moscow and St. Petersburg. I said to Father I would always keep him company when he went there so I could listen to grown-up talk.

One of the waiters at the tavern was my godmother's brother Prokhor. He had a lame leg and everybody called him Limping Proshka. He was an avid hunter, however, shooting ducks in summer and hares in winter: the neighbourhood abounded with them at the time.

Prokhor took me with him pretty often. I was jubilant, and especially so when he bagged a hare I had flushed. We went to the Ogublyanka or the lake. Prokhor never missed and it was my job to retrieve the ducks from the water. I still love hunting. Possibly, it had been Prokhor who taught me to love it.

Father soon went to Moscow again. Before he left he told Mother that factory workers in Moscow and St. Petersburg, driven to desperation by unemployment and ruthless exploitation, were going on strike more and more often.

"Better keep out of it," Mother said, "or else the cops'll ave you!"

"With us workers," Father replied, "it's one for all and ll for one."

For a long time we heard nothing from him and were :rribly worried.

Soon we learned that in St. Petersburg on January 9, ;arist troops and the police had shot a peaceful procession f workers who had come to ask the tsar to grant them better onditions.

In the spring of the same year, 1905, strangers began to requent the villages. These were political agitators who urged he people to rise up against the landowners and tsarist auto- :racy.

Although in our village the peasants staged no revolt, there vas great ferment. They knew of the political strikes, the street fighting and the December 1905 armed uprising in Moscow. They also knew that the uprising, as well as working- class action in Moscow and other cities of Russia, had been harshly suppressed by the tsarist government and that many of the revolutionaries had been murdered, incarcerated or sentenced to hard labour. They had heard, too, about Lenin, the man who spoke for the interests of the workers and peasants, the leader of the Bolshevik Party, a party which sought to deliver the toiling folk from the tsarist regime, the landed proprietors, and the capitalists.

All this information was brought by our fellow-villagers earning a few roubles on the side in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other cities and towns of Russia.

Father returned home in 1906. He said he would not go to Moscow any more as the police had forbidden him to live in the city, allowing him to reside only in his home village. I was happy Father had come back home for good.

That year I finished the three-year parish school. I had top marks in all forms and was awarded honours. The family rejoiced at my progress and I was happy too. To mark the occasion Mother presented me with a new shirt, while Father made me a pair of boots.

"Now that you know your letters," he said, "we can apprentice you to learn some trade in Moscow."

"Let him stay here another year or so," Mother remarked. "Let him grow up a bit."

In the autumn of 1907 I turned eleven. I knew that it was my last autumn at home and that when winter passed I would be apprenticed. I had many cares at home. Mother made frequent trips to town for goods for the shop-keepers, while Father slaved at his cobbling from early morning till late at night. His earnings were negligible because, owing to their poverty, the village folk could seldom pay for the job. Mother often nagged Father for charging them so little.

But whenever Father did turn a few extra roubles making a pair of boots, he usually came home from Ugodsky Zavod tipsy. Sister and I would go out to meet him on the way and he would always have a bun or some sweets for us.

In winter, whenever I had spare time, I mostly went out fishing, skating on home-made runners, or skiing from the Mikhalyovy Hills.

At last the summer of 1908 arrived. My heart ached at the thought that I would soon have to part with kith and kin and leave for Moscow. I was conscious that my childhood was over — if, of course, my earlier years could be called that, though I, naturally, could not expect anything better.

As I remember, one evening the neighbours came to discuss the apprenticing of their children in Moscow. Some said they would send off their children in the next few days, while others said they would wait until their offspring were a year or two older. Mother announced that she would take me there after the fair that we usually had at the village a week after Trinity Sunday. My pal, Alexei Kolotyrny, had already been apprenticed to the joinery of one Murashkin, a rich cabinet-maker in our village.

Father asked me what trade I wanted to learn. I said I wanted to be a printer. Father knew no one who would help apprentice me at a printer's. So Mother said she would ask her brother Mikhail to take me on as an apprentice furrier. Father agreed, as furriers earned pretty well. I was ready to take up any job so long as I could help the family.

A few words about my uncle, Mikhail Artemyevich Pilikhin, who visited the neighbouring village of Chernaya Gryaz in July 1908.

Like Mother, he grew up in poverty. At the age of eleven Mikhail was apprenticed to a furrier's. Four and a half years later he became an adept at the trade. He was thrifty and after several years had enough money put aside to start a small business of his own. He was a good furrier, and had a steady rich clientele whom he fleeced mercilessly.

Little by little, he built up his business until he had eight craftsmen working for him, as well as four boy-apprentices, all of whom he ruthlessly exploited. In this way he hoarded up some 50,000 roubles.

Mother persuaded this brother of hers to take me on. She went to see him in the village of Chernaya Gryaz where he was spending the summer, and on her return told me that her brother wanted to have a look at me. Father asked about the terms.

"You know what they are," Mother said. "Four and a half years before he'll be articled."

"There is nothing we can do about it," Father said. "He'll have to go."

Two days later Father took me to Chernaya Gryaz. As we walked up to the house where the Pilikhins lived, Father said:

"Look, that's your future boss on the porch. When you come up, bow to him and say, 'Good morning, Mikhail Artemyevich'."

"I better say, "Good morning, Uncle Misha!"" said I.

"Forget he's your uncle. He'll be your boss, and rich people have no liking for poor relatives. Keep that in mind."

As we approached the porch, on which my future master slouched in a cane chair, Father greeted him and shoved me forward. Pilikhin did not deign to reply and did not offer his hand to Father. As he turned to me, I bowed and said: "Good morning, Mikhail Artemyevich!"

"Hello, lad! So you've decided to be a furrier?"

I said nothing.

"It's a good trade. But not easy to learn."

"He's not afraid of hardships," Father said. "He's used to working hard."

"Know your letters?"
Father displayed my honours certificate.
"Good for you," Uncle said and then, turning towards the doorway, shouted: "Hey, lazy good-for-nothings, come here!"
His two richly dressed, plumpy sons, Alexander and Nikolai, emerged, followed by my uncle's wife.
"Look at this, you savages," he said showing them my honours certificate. "That's how you must learn instead of just scrapping by." Then he said, finally addressing Father, "Well, I think I'll take your lad. He seems a husky boy and looks as if he is no fool. I'll be here a few more days. After that I'll be leaving for Moscow. But I can't take him with me. My brother-in-law, Sergei, will do that when he goes to Moscow in a week."
That was that. I was glad I had another week at home.
"Well, how did my darling brother receive you?" Mother asked.
"You know the sort of welcome bosses give our kind."
"Did he offer you tea?"
"Why, he didn't even ask us to sit after the long road. He sat while we stood like soldiers on parade." Then Father added: "We don't need his tea. Me and the boy'll drop in at the tavern and have tea for our own hard-earned coppers."
Mother gave me a bun and off we went to the tavern.
It did not take long to pack. Mother gave me some underclothes, a couple of footcloths, and a towel, as well as half a dozen eggs and some pancakes to eat on the way. After prayers, we sat down for a moment of silence according to the good old Russian custom.
"Well, sonny, God bless you," Mother said. She hugged me to her bosom and tears welled up in her eyes. I saw Father's eyes grow red and a couple of tears roll down his cheeks. I could hardly restrain myself, but managed not to cry.
Mother and I went on foot to Chernaya Gryaz. Previously, I had followed the road to school and to the woods for berries and mushrooms.
"Remember, Mum, how I cut my little finger, when out reaping, by those three oaks?"

"Of course, I remember, son. Mothers always remember what happens to their children. Wicked are the children who forget their mothers."

"It won't happen to me, Mum," I said firmly.

Uncle Sergei and I had just boarded the train when the rain came down in sheets. It was dark inside, just one tallow candle barely picking out the narrow corridor in our third-class coach. The train pulled out and through the window I glimpsed the dark outline of the woods and the lights of remote villages.

I had never ridden in a train before — in fact, had never seen a railway. You can imagine how impressed I was. We passed Balabanovo station and then there suddenly loomed brightly lit, tall buildings.

"What's this town?" I asked an elderly gentleman standing by the window.

"That's no town, boy. That's Savva Morozov's Naro-Fominsk textile mills. I worked there for fifteen years. Now, I work there no longer."

"Why so?"

"It's a long story... I buried wife and daughter there."

His face grew pale and for an instant he closed his eyes.

"Each time I go past those cursed mills, I just can't look calmly at the monster that swallowed my dear ones..."

He moved away from the window, sat down in a dark corner, and lit a cigarette. I continued staring at the "monster" which "swallows" people, but did not dare ask the gentleman how it did that.

We reached Moscow at daybreak. We had travelled over four hours. These days it takes a little over one hour. I was stunned by the hustle and bustle at the railway station. Crowds were rushing towards the exit, pushing and shoving with elbow, basket, bag and trunk. I could not understand why everybody was in such a hurry.

"Stop gaping," my uncle said. "This is no village. You've got to look alive here."

Finally we emerged onto the square in front of the railway station. Outside the tavern a brisk trade was being done in hot mead, pancakes and pastries stuffed with liver and entrails for a cheap snack. It was still too early to go to my master,

so we went to the tavern. We made our way across puddles and mud and past tattered drunks sitting or lying on the pavement or right on the ground. Inside there was loud music and I recognized a familiar tune. Some of the customers, who had had a drink or two, took up the refrain in a ragged chorus.

Our tea over, we went to Bolshaya Dorogomilovskaya to wait for the horse-car. There was no tram there yet, which at the time was new to Moscow. In the haste of climbing up to the deck a passenger accidentally hit me with the heel of his boot. My nose bled.

"I told you you've got to look lively," Uncle Sergei grumbled, while the man who had hit me gave me a rag and said: "You're from the country, I suppose? Here in Moscow you've got to look out for yourself."

I was not particularly impressed with the railway station square or the adjacent streets. The houses were small and squalid, while the street itself was filthy, heavily rutted, with many drunks and people for the most part poorly clad.

But the closer we came to the heart of the city, the more its appearance changed: I saw large houses, smart-looking shops, and rich carriages. I was in a daze, looked about me in confusion, and felt a bit depressed. Never before had I seen houses over two stories high, paved streets, and carriages with pneumatic tyres drawn at great speed by handsome horses. Nor had I seen such crowds of people.

All of it stunned my imagination. I gaped in silence, listening to Uncle Sergei with but half an ear. We turned into Bolshaya Dmitrovka (now Pushkinskaya) and got off the horse-car at the corner of Kamergersky Lane (now Art Theatre Lane).

"That's the house you're going to live in," Uncle Sergei said. "In the yard is the workshop. That's where you're going to work. The main entrance is from the lane, but the craftsmen and apprentices use the back door. Make a note of everything I tell you. That there is Kuznetsky Most, the best shopping street in Moscow. And that's the Zimin playhouse, but no working folk go there. Further down and to the right is Okhotny Ryad, where the greengrocers', butchers', and fishmongers' are. You'll run errands there for the master's missus."

Passing through the big courtyard, we approached the craftsmen and exchanged greetings. Uncle Sergei respectfully tipped his hat to everyone.

"Here's a new apprentice for you," he said. "From the country."

"He looks rather small," somebody observed. "Ought to have grown a bit."

"How old are you, lad?" a tall man asked. "Twelve," I replied.

"Yes, he's rather small, but he looks broad in the shoulders."

"Cheer up, boy, you'll be a good furrier when you grow up," an old craftsman said gently. This was Fyodor Ivanovich Kolesov, a very fair man, as I learned later, and an experienced furrier whom the others held in great esteem.

Taking me aside, Uncle Sergei indicated each craftsman and apprentice by name and gave me a few particulars about them.

I well remember the Mishin brothers.

"The elder one's good at the trade but drinks too much," Uncle Sergei said, "and the younger is terribly stingy. They say he spends only ten kopecks a day on his meals. Keeps dreaming of starting his own business.

"That fellow is Mikhailo," Uncle Sergei went on. "He drinks, too, and very heavily. After payday he's drunk morning, day and night for two or three days running and will give the shirt off his back for vodka. But he's top-notch at the trade.

"And that there is the senior apprentice," Uncle Sergei indicated a tall boy, "he's directly over you. Name of Kuzma. His apprenticeship'll be up in a year's time. The curly-headed fellow over there is Grigory Matveyev. Hails from the village of Trubino and is a distant relative of yours."

We climbed up a murky and filthy staircase to the first floor and entered the workshop.

My master's wife came out, said hello and added that the master wasn't in. He was expected shortly.

"Come," she said, "I'll show you the layout and then you'll have dinner in the kitchen."

She went on to detail my future duties as the youngest of the apprentices. I had to tidy up the rooms, polish the shoes

of my master's family, including those of the children, and light the incense burners in front of the icons. "As for your other duties, Kuzma and Matryosha, the forewoman, will tell you what you have to do."

After that Kuzma called me to dinner in the kitchen. I was rather hungry by then and willingly set to. But here an unforeseen mishap occurred. I did not know the rule that we ate our cabbage soup from the common pot without the meat and were allowed a piece of meat only towards the end, after the forewoman tapped on the pot. I fished out and gobbled down a couple of pieces, and was about to go for my third when all of a sudden I was hit on the head with a spoon so hard that a swelling rose at once.

I felt taken aback to find myself beaten twice in my first half a day in Moscow.

Kuzma turned out to be a good chap.

"Grin and bear it when you're beaten," he whispered to me after dinner. "A beaten man is worth two who aren't."

That day Kuzma took me on a round of the nearest shops which I would go to for tobacco and vodka for the craftsmen. Meanwhile Matryosha, who also cooked for us, showed me how to wash the dishes and start the samovar.

Next morning I was given a seat in the corner and told that I would first have to learn to sew. The forewoman provided me with needle, thread and thimble, instructed in the art, and told:

"If things don't go right, come to me, and I'll show you how to do it."

I applied myself to my task with diligence.

Work started at 7 a. m. sharp and stopped at 7 p. m. There was an hour's break for dinner. This meant an eleven-hour day, but when there was much work, the craftsmen stayed overtime till as late as eleven o'clock at night. In that case the day could be fifteen hours long. They received additional piece rates for this.

We apprentices had to be out of bed at six in the morning. After a quick wash under the tap, we got ready the workbenches and everything else that the furriers might need. We turned in at eleven in the evening, after everything had been tidied up and prepared for the next day, sleeping on the floor in

the workshop, and in very cold weather on bunks in the hall inside the back entrance.

At the beginning I tired quickly. I couldn't get used to staying up late. Back home we went to bed very early. But in time I grew accustomed to the heavy day, bearing up stoically.

At the beginning I was overwhelmed with nostalgia, recollecting the groves and thickets where I had gone hunting with Prokhor, or berrying and mushrooming with Sister. My heart ached and I wanted to cry. I thought I would never see my parents, Sister and playmates again. Apprentices were let off home for a holiday only after three years of work, and it seemed as if the time would never come.

On Saturdays, Kuzma took us to vespers and on Sundays to matins and mass. On big holidays our master took us to mass at the Kremlin Assumption Cathedral, or sometimes to the big Cathedral of the Saviour. We did not like going to church, always looking for a chance to escape. Assumption Cathedral was an exception, of course, for there we enjoyed the glorious choir, and were especially eager to hear Deacon Rozov who had a voice like a trumpet.

A year passed. I made fairly good progress in the rudiments of the furrier's trade, though it was not at all easy. Our master beat us pitilessly for the slightest mistake. We were beaten by the craftsmen, the craftswomen and the mistress, too. Whenever the master was out of sorts, it was better to avoid him, as he would hit out at us so severely that one felt a ringing in the ears for the rest of the day.

Now and again the master would make two of the boys beat one another with branches of honey-suckle — used to curry fur — and would mutter: "Harder, harder." We had to submit to this without demurral.

We knew that bosses always tanned their apprentices — such was the way of things. Our master held that he had us apprentices at his full service, that no one could take him to task for inhuman treatment of children. Indeed, no one ever took any interest in our working conditions, in what we ate, and how we lived. Our supreme judge was our master. So we slaved and sweated, though not every adult would have borne it.

Time passed. I turned thirteen and had already learned much. Though I was run off my feet, I nevertheless found

time to read. Always, I gratefully remember my school-master, Sergei Nikolayevich Remizov, who had infected me with a passion for reading. In this I was helped by Alexander, my master's elder boy. He was of the same age as I and treated me better than the others.

With his help, I read a novel entitled, *The Nurse*, the full Pinkerton and Sherlock Holmes series, and some other adventure stories. This was interesting but not very edifying. Yet I wanted to learn. Only I did not know how. I confided in Alexander, who approved and said he would help.

We undertook further studies of Russian, maths and geography, and read popular books on science. We usually did this together, for the most part on Sundays and when the master was out. Though we took great pains to conceal our studies from him, he nevertheless found us out. I thought he would kick me out or give me a good hiding. For some reason, however — I do not know why — he commended us for doing a sensible thing.

I applied myself to these studies for more than a year on my own and then entered a night school which provided a course of instruction equivalent to that of a city school.

The craftsmen were pleased with me as was my master, though from time to time he would still strike or kick me. He did not want to let me go to the night school at first, but his sons prevailed on him to agree. I was very happy. True, I had to do my lessons at night on the bunk, near the toilet where a dim bulb burned all night.

A month before my final exams, on a Sunday, when our master had left to visit friends, we sat down to a game of cards. Blackjack it was, as I remember. We did not notice how he returned and came to the kitchen. I was the dealer and had a run of luck. All of a sudden I got a resounding bash on the ear. Startled, I looked up and was horrified to see the master. I was so stunned that I could not say a word. All the other boys vanished.

"So that's what you want an education for?" he shouted. "To count the pips! There'll be no more school for you, my lad, and I won't let Alexander help you!"

A couple of days later I called at my school on Tverskaya Street and told them what had happened. I had only a little

more than a month to go. I was laughed at, but allowed to take the exams, which I successfully passed.

By now it was 1911. I had done three years of my apprenticeship and was now a senior with three smaller boys under me. I was familiar with Moscow, because I took parcels to various addresses all over town oftener than the others. I wanted to continue my studies, but had not the slightest opportunity. Still I managed to keep up with my reading.

I read the papers after old man Kolesov, who was better up in politics than the others. I got some magazines from cousin Alexander, and bought my own books with money saved on tram fares. Now and again my master would send me with a parcel somewhere further out and gave me a couple of coppers for the tram. I would walk the distance and save the money.

In my fourth year, as the strongest of the apprentices, my master took me along to the famous fair in Nizhny Novgorod, now the city of Gorky. He had rented a stall there for wholesale trading in furs. By that time he had grown exceedingly rich, had acquired good connections, and was more avaricious than before.

My duties at the fair were mostly to crate the lots sold and to dispatch them to consignees via the wharves on the Volga or Oka, or the railway goods depot.

This was the first time I saw the Volga and was greatly impressed by its beauty and majesty. Before, I had never seen a river bigger than the Protva and Moskva. The first time I glimpsed the Volga was in the early morning. The river sparkled in the rays of the rising sun. I stood staring, unable to tear my eyes away. Now I understand, I thought to myself, why so many songs are sung about it, why it is called the mother of rivers.'

Merchants and buyers from all over Russia, and from abroad, came to the Nizhny Novgorod fair. It was located outside the city, about half way to Kanavino, in a low valley that was invariably inundated during the spring floods. All sorts of people came to the fair to turn an honest or dishonest penny. Thieves, prostitutes and swindlers flocked there in droves to engage in their shady business.

That year, after the Nizhny Novgorod fair I had to go to another fair, this time in Uryupino, in the region of the Don

Cossacks. My master did not go and delegated Vasily Danilov, a senior clerk. My recollections of Uryupino are paler compared to what I remember of Nizhny Novgorod and the Volga. This was a smallish, dirty town, and the fair was not large either.

Vasily Danilov, the clerk, was an evil and cruel man. I still cannot understand what sadistic quirk made him strike out at me, a 14-year-old boy, at the slightest pretext. One day I could stand it no longer, caught up an oak stick and walloped him over the head with all my strength. He fell into a swoon. I was scared. Thinking that I had killed him, I ran away, and returned only when I learned he had come to.

Back in Moscow, he complained to the master who, without giving me a hearing, beat me cruelly.

In 1912, I was lucky to get ten days' leave to visit my family. The time of hay-making, the most interesting type of farm job had begun. Menfolk and the young chaps came home from the city to help the women cope more quickly with the job and stock up enough fodder for the winter.

I had left the village a child, and returned a young man getting on for sixteen, about to finish my apprenticeship. Many faces were missing: some had died, others had been apprenticed out, or had gone to town in search of work. Some I failed to recognize; some failed to recognize me. Some were twisted by their hard life, by premature old age, others had grown to adulthood.

To come to the village, I took the Maloyaroslavets suburban train, standing the entire distance at the open train window. When I travelled to Moscow four years earlier, it was night time and I had seen none of the scenery along the way. Now I watched with interest the station structures and the lovely woods and copses around Moscow.

As we were going past Naro-Fominsk, one of the passengers observed to his neighbour: "I often visited this place before 1905. You see those red brick buildings? Those are Savva Morozov's mills."

"They say he's democratic," the other said.

"Yes, he's a bourgeois democrat, and they say he treats his workers not too badly. But his managers are a bunch of sharks."

"They're all tarred with the same brush," the second said acidly.

When they noticed that I was listening with interest, recollecting what I had heard in the coach about the factory several years back, they fell silent.

I was met at Obolenskaya station by Mother. She had changed greatly, and had aged in these four years. I could hardly speak and was barely able to restrain my tears.

Mother cried and cried, hugging me close with her work-hardened horny hands and kept saying: "Sonny darling, I never thought I'd see you again."

"Now, now, Mother," I comforted her. "See what a grown-up boy I am. Now life will be easier for you."

"May God grant it," she said.

By the time we got home it was dark. Father and Sister were waiting for us on the porch. Sister had grown up into a pretty girl, but Father was bent and aged. He was nearing 70. We kissed, then apparently thinking of something of his own, he said: "It's good I've lived to see you. I see you're grown up and strong."

To sooner relish the delight I was sure my parents and Sister would show, I unpacked my basket. I had presents for everyone. I also gave Mother three roubles in cash, a couple of pounds of sugar, a pound of sweets and half a pound of tea.

"Thanks ever so much," Mother was overjoyed. "It's a long time since we had real tea with sugar."

I gave Father a rouble to spend at the tavern.

"Twenty kopecks would be quite enough for him," Mother grumbled.

"I've waited for the boy for four years, so don't spoil it with talk of our poverty," Father replied.

A day later, Mother, Sister and I went out hay-making. I was glad to see my old friends, especially my bosom pal Alexei Kolotyrny. All the boys had grown visibly. I could not get off to a good start, tiring quickly and perspiring. Evidently, my four-year absence told. Then everything went well. I cut a beautiful swathe, keeping up with the rest, though throat and mouth ran dry and I was more than thankful when we knocked off.

"Well, Georgi, surely it's no picnic to be a farmer?" Uncle Nazar observed throwing an arm round my sweating shoulders.

"That's certainly so," I said.

"The English use machines to mow," a young chap I did not know said.

"Very true," said Nazar." "But we here stick to our wooden plough and scythes."

I asked who the chap was who spoke of machines.

"Why, that's Nikolai, the village elder's son. He was expelled from Moscow for his part in 1905. He's got a razor-edge tongue and even curses the tsar."

"That's all right," Alexei Kolotyrny remarked, "as long as the cops and narks don't hear you."

The sun blazed down fiercely. We finished mowing and now dried the mown hay. By midday Sister and I had stacked up the hay on our cart and drove home. A plate of fried potatoes with butter and a cup of sweetened tea already awaited us. I was ravenous.

In the evenings, we young folk, fatigue forgotten, gathered round the barn to make merry. We sang songs that gripped you at the heartstrings. The village girls led in rich ripe voices, the young men catching up the melody in as yet unsteady basses and baritones. Then we danced till ready to drop. We broke up towards dawn, barely managing to catch a few winks of sleep before we were roused and went out mowing again. As soon as evening came the fun started anew. It was indeed hard to say when we slept. In one's salad days one can even go without sleep. It's good to be young!

My leave flashed by and I had to return to Moscow. The night but one before I was to go, a fire broke out in the neighbouring village of Kostinka. A heavy wind was blowing. The conflagration had started in the middle of the village and soon the flames spread to the neighbouring houses, sheds and barns. We were still up and awake, and the entire crowd of us rushed to roll out the fire barrel, reaching Kostinka even before the local fire brigade was up.

The fire was big. Despite the desperate efforts of the fire brigades, which had rushed in from neighbouring villages, half the village burnt down.

Running with a pail of water past a house, I heard shouts for help. I rushed to the house from which I heard the cries, and dragged out several mortally frightened children and a sick old crone.

At last the blaze was put out. On the smoking ruins women moaned and children sobbed. Many were left homeless and had lost all their possessions. Some had not even a crust of bread left.

Next morning I discovered that the sparks had burnt a couple of holes each the size of a five-kopeck coin in my new jacket which my master had given me, as was the custom, when I was going on leave.

"The boss'll be pretty nasty," Mother remarked.

"So what," I said. "Let him decide what is more important, a couple of holes in my jacket or kids saved?"

I left heavy-hearted, especially when I again saw the ruins and ashes, where unfortunates were poking around to see if they could salvage something. I felt compassion for them, well knowing what it meant to be homeless.

I arrived in Moscow in the early morning. After greeting my master, I told him about the fire and pointed to the holes burnt in my jacket. To my surprise, he let it pass. In my heart I was grateful.

Later I learned that I had simply been lucky. The day before, my master had sold a consignment of furs at a great profit.

"If not for that," Fyodor Ivanovich observed, "you would have been flogged within an inch of your life."

My term of apprenticeship ended in late 1912. Now I was a learned-craftsman. My master asked me what I intended to do next. He wanted to know whether I would find digs for myself or continue to live in with them.

"If you lodge here and board with the apprentices, I'll pay you ten roubles. If you lodge out, you'll get eighteen."

Still very much a greenhorn, I said I would continue to live in. My master was apparently satisfied with this arrangement, for after the other craftsmen knocked off, he would always dig up an urgent but unpaid job for me.

After a little while I was fed up, and said to myself I had to find lodgings, as this would give me time to do some reading in the evenings.

At Christmas I again went home, now quite an independent young man. I was sixteen but, more important, I was a craftsman drawing ten roubles a month, which not many were able to make at the time.

My master trusted me, having convinced himself in my honesty. He often sent me to the bank to cash a cheque or make a deposit. He also appreciated me as a worker who never refused a job, and frequently took me along with him to his shop, where besides working on the trade I was told to pack and crate furs and dispatch them to the warehouses.

I liked this more than working at the workshop, where one heard nothing but a lot of cursing the livelong day. At the shop the atmosphere was totally different. There, a more or less intellectual crowd could often be heard discussing current events.

At the workshop none of the craftsmen read the papers and none except for Kolesov had any notion of politics — which I suppose was pretty much the picture at all the other furrieries. We had no union in those days and all of us were left to our own devices. A union of leather workers, incorporating us furriers, was organized a while later.

The furriers, except for a few isolated cases, were conspicuous at the time for their complete political apathy. Each craftsman was concerned only for himself. Some endeavoured by hook or by crook to hoard up some money and start their own business. In fact, as concerned their petty-bourgeois philosophy and absence of proletarian solidarity the furriers, tailors and other artisans were a far cry from factory workers, from real proletarians.

The factory hand, naturally, could not even dream of starting his own business. Many thousands of roubles were needed. He got a miserable pittance, barely enough to keep body and soul together. Working conditions and the constant menace of unemployment made the factory workers unite in the struggle against their exploiters.

At the time, the Bolsheviks conducted political agitation among the industrial proletariat. The artisans were mostly under the influence of Mensheviks, Socialist Revolutionaries and sundry other pseudo-revolutionaries. No wonder, there were few artisans and craftsmen among the rebellious proletariat either in 1905 or in the Great October Socialist Revolution.

In 1910 to 1914 the revolutionary ferment increased visibly. Strikes flared up more and more often in Moscow, St. Petersburg and other industrial centres. Student rallies and strikes were also

more frequent. Meanwhile in the countryside, the peasants were desperate owing to the effects of the famine of 1911.

Still, though the furriers were not wise to politics, we had heard of the massacre of workers at the Lena goldfields, and felt the universal upswing of revolutionary ferment. Now and again Kolesov would bring a Bolshevik paper, either *Zvezda* (Star) or *Pravda* (Truth), which explained in understandable terms why the contradictions between the workers and capitalists and between the peasants and landowners could not be reconciled, and which demonstrated the identity of the interests of the urban proletariat and the village poor.

Though at the time my political knowledge was less than rudimentary I clearly realized that these papers voiced worker-and-peasant interests. *Russkoye Slovo* (Russian Word) and *Moskovskiye Vedomosti* (Moscow News), on the other hand, were the mouthpieces of the capitalists who dominated in tsarist Russia. When I went home I was already able to tell of and explain some things to my fellow-villagers.

I remember the outbreak of the First World War mostly because of the raids on foreign-owned shops in Moscow. Exploiting patriotic sentiments, secret police agents and Black Hundred gangs sacked German and Austrian firms, involving in this many looters. Since the common people knew no foreign tongues, they raided French and British firms, too.

Because of the propaganda, many young fellows, spurred by patriotic sentiments, especially from among the well-to-do, volunteered for the front. My cousin Alexander had also made up his mind to run away to the front and insistently persuaded me to follow suit.

I rather liked the idea at first, but decided to ask Fyodor Ivanovich, in my eyes an unimpeachable authority, for advice. He heard me out and then said: "I can understand why Alexander wants to go. He's got a rich father and so has got what to fight for. But you, ninny, what have you got to fight for? For your father having been chased out of Moscow? Or for your mother all swelling up with hunger? You'll come back a cripple and no one will want you."

This convinced me and I told Alexander I would not go. He cursed me and ran away that night, to be brought back with grave wounds just a couple of months later.

I was still at the workshop but had lodgings in Okhotny Ryad across the road from where Hotel Moskva now towers. I rented a cot for three roubles a month from one Malysheva, a widow whose daughter Maria I fell in love with. We were about to get married but, as often happens, the war upset all our plans. Because of the heavy losses at the front, young men not yet twenty, born in 1895, were inducted before their time. My turn was soon due.

I did not feel any too enthusiastic about it, as at every step I saw unfortunate cripples back from the front — a striking contrast to the children of the rich who spent their time dashing around Moscow in posh carriages, betting at the horse races or celebrating drunken orgies at the former Yar Restaurant. Still I thought that when my turn came I would fight honestly for my country.

At the end of July 1915 young men of my age were being drafted. I asked my master for leave to go home to say goodbye to my parents and also lend them a hand with the harvesting.

## Chapter 2

## A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I was called up at the district seat of Maloyaroslavets in Kaluga province on August 7, 1915, when the First World War was already in full swing.

I was assigned to the cavalry and was very happy to serve in it, for I entertained many romantic feelings about it. My chums were recruited into the infantry, and many envied me.

A week later all conscripts were called out to the induction centre. We were broken into lots and I parted with my chums. All around me were strangers, as green and callow as myself.

Towards dusk we entrained and headed for Kaluga. I felt a gnawing loneliness. My youth was over. Was I really prepared to perform a soldier's onerous duties, and go into battle if need be? Inured by previous hardships, I hoped I would do my duty honourably.

The goods wagons into which we were crammed forty men apiece, were not adapted to carrying people. One had the choice of either standing all the way or sitting on the filthy floor. Some of the men sang, some played cards, some sobbed on their neighbours' shoulders, some sat gritting their teeth, staring vacuously, and reflecting on their soldier's future.

We arrived in Kaluga at night, and were told to line up on the goods siding. We then marched away from the town. Someone asked the corporal where we were going. He must have been a nice fellow, for he gave us the following advice: "Look here, men, never ask your superiors such questions. The soldier's got to do everything he's told and ask no questions. Where he goes is for his superiors to know."

As if to confirm this there rang out from the head of our column a loud voice: "Quit talking in the ranks!"

Nikolai Sivtsov, my new pal, poked me in the ribs and whispered "Well, there you are, we're in the army now."

We had been slogging along for some three hours when a brief halt was called. It was near daybreak, we flung ourselves down on the ground and almost at once snores were heard.

We were soon ordered to fall in again and after another hour reached camp. Here we were put up on bare boards in a hut holding already some one hundred men. Though the wind whistled freely through the many cracks and shattered window-panes the stench was terrible. We were told we could rest till 7 o'clock.

After breakfast we were lined up and told that we were with the 189th Reserve Infantry Battalion, where a detachment for the 5th Reserve Cavalry Regiment would be activated. Prior to being sent to our assignment, we would be taught ordinary drill.

We were issued training rifles. Corporal Shakhvorostov, our squad commander, announced the rules, regulations and duties. He warned us that we could not fall out except to "attend to the call of nature", if we didn't want to be sent to the stockade. Each word that he snapped out he stressed with a sweep of his fist. His tiny eyes glittered menacingly as if we were his sworn enemies.

"Can't expect anything good from him," one man said.

The senior NCO came up and our corporal rapped out: "Shun!"

"I'm your platoon commander Malyavko," said the senior NCO. "I hope you've all understood what your squad commander said and will loyally serve tsar and country. I will tolerate no insubordination!"

Our first day of infantry drill began. Everyone of us tried hard to do the evolution well, but it was not easy to please our superiors or earn commendation. Picking on a man who had fallen out of step, the platoon commander kept all of us at extra drill. As a result the slops we had for dinner were cold when we got them.

I was depressed. All I wanted was to turn in for the night. However, as if reading our minds, the platoon commander ordered us to fall in and announced that tomorrow night we would have evening roll-call, and that therefore tonight we

had to learn the national anthem, "God Save the Tsar". This choir continued till late at night. And at 6 a.m. we were roused for morning exercises.

The days, one so much like the other, rolled in dreary monotony. Then came our first Sunday. We thought we would have respite and would take a bath, but we were marched out for fatigue detail. This continued till the mid-day meal. After the "siesta" we cleaned our weapons, patched and darned, and wrote letters home. Our corporal warned us not to complain in letters home because that sort of thing would be cut out by the censors anyway.

It was hard to accustom oneself to army routine. But we had had it none too easy before, and after about a fortnight most of us felt broken in.

After a couple of weeks of training our platoon was lined up for inspection by Captain Volodin, the company commander. He was said to be a heavy drinker, whom it was best to avoid when he was in his cups. Outwardly, though, he seemed no different from the other officers. We could see, however, that for him the inspection parade held no interest. After a short speech he wound up by urging us to display zeal: "God repays you for your prayer and the tsar for your service."

Before we were transferred to the 5th Reserve Cavalry Regiment we saw the company commander a few more times, and invariably he seemed to be drunk. As for the commanding officer of the 189th Reserve Battalion, we never saw him once during our training.

In September 1915, we were sent to our regiment which was quartered in the town of Balakleya in Kharkov province in the Ukraine.

We bypassed the town and came to the railway station of Savintsy where replacements were being marshalled for the 10th Cavalry Division. On the platform we were met by smartly dressed cavalry NCOs. Their different uniforms denoted that they were from the Hussars, the Uhlans, and the Dragoons.

Our group from Maloyaroslavets, Moscow, and a few young chaps from Voronezh province, were assigned to a squadron of Dragoons.

We were disappointed that it was not the Hussars; and not only because they had nattier uniforms. We had been told, the NCOs there were more decent. And in the tsarist army the soldier's entire life depended on his NCOs.

A day later we were issued our cavalry uniforms and all the other accoutrements and were assigned horses. I drew a shrewish dark-grey mare by the name of Chashechnaya.

Though service in the cavalry was much more interesting than in the infantry, we had a much harder time. Besides general drill we had to learn horsemanship and the use of side-arms and curried our horses three times a day. Reveille was at 5 a.m. and not at 6 as in the infantry, and taps also came an hour later.

Hardest of all was the horsemanship and the use of sabre and lance. Many of us had blisters drawing blood, but complaints were forbidden. We were told to grin and bear it, and we did as best we could until we were finally able to sit straight in the saddle. Our platoon commander, senior NCO Durakov, was, despite his name (which meant "fool"), quite a clever person. Though most exacting, he was fair and reserved. Our other commander, however, junior NCO Borodavko, was his complete opposite — a blustering bully who would lash out for no reason at all. Veterans said that he had knocked out soldiers' teeth more than once.

He was especially ruthless when in charge of our riding drill. When Durakov went on a brief furlough for family reasons he did all he could to break us. In the daytime he rode us until we were half dead, picking especially on those who had lived and worked in Moscow, as he considered them "bookworms" and too big for their boots. And at night he inspected the posted sentinels, mercilessly pummelling those whom he caught napping. The men were driven to despair.

One day we trapped him in a dark corner and, throwing a horse-cloth over his head, beat him up till he was unconscious. We would certainly have been court-martialled if not for the return of our platoon commander who hushed the matter up and then had Borodavko transferred to another squadron.

By the spring of 1916 we were essentially a well-trained cavalry unit. We were told that we would soon receive marching

orders, but would continue field training pending departure for the front lines. New recruits, one year our juniors, took our places as we prepared to move to other quarters in the village of Lageri.

Some thirty of our best men were picked for NCO training courses. I was one of them. I did not particularly relish the idea, but our platoon commander, whom I greatly respected for his decency, cleverness and friendly disposition to us men, persuaded me to file my application.

"You'll still have time to get to the front," he said. "First learn soldiering a bit more. I'm sure you'll make a pretty good NCO."

Then, after some reflection, he added: "I for one am in no hurry to go back to the front. I had a year there and it taught me a lot. It's a pity our folk die so senselessly. What for, I ask you?"

He said nothing more, but I realized that deep down he could not reconcile his army service with the feelings of a man who could no longer brook tsarist despotism. I thanked him for his advice and agreed to join the training course in the town of Izyum in Kharkov province. There were about 240 of us there, from different units.

We were billeted in private quarters, and soon our training began. Unfortunately, we had a savage senior NCO, still worse than Borodavko. I don't remember his name, only that he was nicknamed "Four-and-a-Half"— because a phalange was missing on the index finger of his right hand. This did not prevent his knocking a soldier down with one swipe of his fist. Though he seemed to dislike me more than the others, for some reason he never struck me. But he picked on me on the slightest pretext, and subjected me to all sorts of punishments.

I guess I must have done more pack drill, KP and extra Sunday detail than anyone else. I knew that it was all due to the frustrations of an exceedingly doltish and unkind man. On the other hand, I was glad that he could never find fault with me during classes.

Seeing evidently that he could not get me down, he decided to change his tactics and, perhaps, simply to divert me from my training in which I was making better progress than the rest.

One day he summoned me to his tent and said:

"Look here, I see you're strong-minded, educated and learn easily. You're a Muscovite, a worker. Why sweat every day at drill? You be my clerk, off the roster, and do all the paper work and other tasks."

I told him I had joined the course not to be somebody's errand boy, but to learn the job properly and be a good NCO. He grew red in the face and threatened: "All right! You'll never be an NCO! I'll see to that!"

The course was to end in June and we were to pass our exams. According to the regulations, the top man passed out a junior NCO, the others getting only candidate rank. My mates had not the slightest doubt that I would get first place and be made an NCO, and a squad commander as soon as there was a vacancy.

It came as a surprise for everyone when a fortnight before the exams it was announced at roll-call that I was being discharged for insubordination and disloyalty to my immediate superior. All realized that "Four-and-a-Half" was settling scores with me. However, there was nothing to be done.

Help came, though, from quite an unexpected quarter. One of the trainees, Skorino by name, who was a volunteer and not a drafted man like the rest of us, happened to be the brother of the second in command officer in my former squadron. Though he made poor progress and had no fancy for the army, he was a pleasant and sociable fellow whom our "Four-and-a-Half" feared. He at once informed the course chief of the injustice that was being done to me.

Summoned to appear before the commander I fell into a funk as I had never spoken to an officer before. I thought it was curtains for me, that I would be packed off to the stockade.

We knew very little about the training course chief, only that he had been promoted for gallantry, had been decorated with St. George Crosses of almost every class, and that before the war he had served in the Uhlans as extended-service NCO. We had seen him only a few times at evening roll-call. It was said he was unwell after being wounded.

To my astonishment, I saw a man with gentle, I would even say warm, eyes in a kind open face.



A Russian village scene before the Revolution



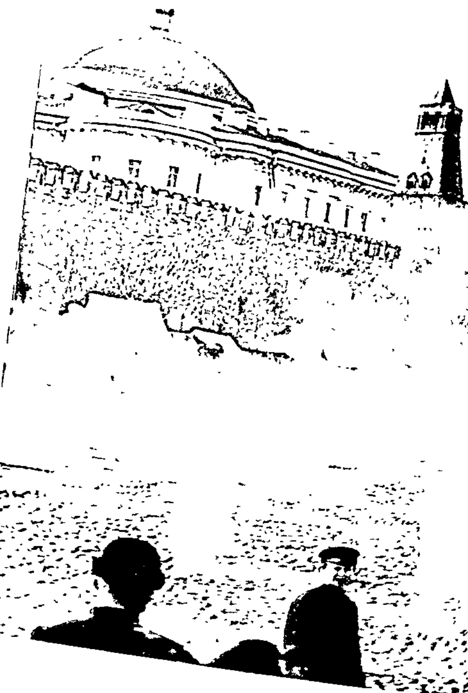


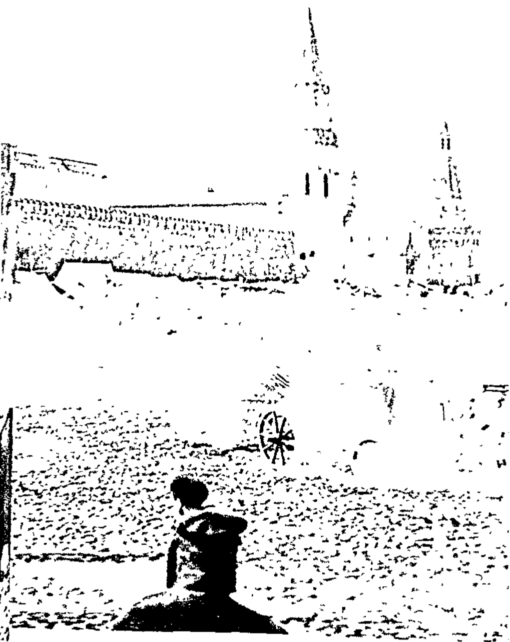
The home village



Ugorsky Zavod (now Zhukovo) in the 30s







Old Moscow





Petrovka Street, Moscow, in 1909



NCO Georgi Zhukov, 1916





A political meeting of soldiers of the Dukhovishchensky Regiment, 1917





A political meeting of soldiers of the Dukhovishchensky Regiment, 1917







"Well, it looks as if you're not too lucky," he said motioning me to be seated. I kept standing, too scared to sit down.

"Take a seat. I won't eat you. I hear you're from Moscow?"

"Yes, Sir," I replied loudly.

"I'm a Muscovite too. Before the army I was a cabinet-maker, but I seem stuck here in the army," he quietly observed. After a pause, he continued. "You seem to have a bad name. They say that in four months of training you've chalked up a dozen demerits, and that you cuss your platoon commander behind his back. In that true?"

"Yes, Sir," I replied. "But, Sir, I can say that in my place any other man would do the same."

I gave him the full picture. He heard me out, and said: "Go back to your platoon and prepare for your exams."

I was happy it had all panned out. Still I did not get first place. I got candidate rank like all the rest.

As I now recollect the NCO course in the old army, I must say that it gave good training, especially in marching drill. The graduate was a good horseman adept in the use of weapons and a good drill master. No wonder after the Great October Revolution many NCOs of the old army rose to prominence as commanders in the Red Army.

As for the general training, drill was all-important. The future NCO was not taught the human approach. He was expected to mould the soldier into a pliant robot. Discipline was maintained by harshness. Though regulations did not stipulate corporal punishment, it was rather common.

So much has been written about the old Russian army, that I do not think I should mention more than a few points that could be of interest.

The salient feature of the old tsarist army was the total absence of any rapport between the ranks and the officers.

However, in the course of the war, especially in 1916 and early 1917, when the heavily depleted officer corps had to draw for replenishments on working intellectuals, factory workers and peasants with some amount of schooling, and also on rankers and NCOs commended for gallantry, in army units up to battalion strength this estrangement was to some degree surmounted. It remained intact in all larger formations, how-

ever. Generals and officers had no affinity with the ra
and file and had no idea of what went on in the minds of t
men.

Because of this and also because of their poor knowledg
of tactics, most generals and officers — with the exceptio
of a few — enjoyed no prestige among the soldiers. On the
other hand, especially towards the close of the war, there
were among the lower-ranking officers many who were close
in sentiment and spirit to their subordinates. Such men
were liked, trusted and followed through thick and thin.

The backbone of the old army were the NCOs who instruct-ed and knit together the mass of the soldiers. Candidates for NCO training were handpicked, and sent to special courses which, as a rule, gave exemplary combat training. At the same time, as I have already said, penalties were inflicted for the slightest fault. Trainees were physically and morally humiliated. Thus NCOs were well drilled, and had also been taught to treat their subordinates as they themselves had been treated.

The officers had full faith in their NCOs as far as drill was concerned. This naturally served to develop in the NCO a sense of responsibility, independence, initiative and will. In real fighting NCOs, especially career NCOs, were mostly very fine commanders.

My many years in the army have demonstrated that wher-ever confidence in NCOs is lacking and wherever they are continuously bossed by the officers, you have no real NCOs and no really combatworthy units.

In early August orders came from the regiment to assign us graduates to combat squadrons. Fifteen of us were to report to the 10th Cavalry Division at the front. I was second on the list and was not astonished, for I knew who was behind it.

When the list was read out, "Four-and-a-Half" grinned hugely, as if to intimate that our fate depended upon him. We were then treated to a special celebration dinner and ordered to pack. We shouldered our kitbags, lined up, and a couple of hours later were entrained for Kharkov.

It was a slow journey, with hours spent idling on small junctions, for at that time an infantry division was being rushed to the front. Hospital trains from the front were also

shunted to let troop trains through. The wounded gave us plenty of information. We learned that our armies were very poorly equipped, that the generals were held in bad repute, and that the opinion was widely current amidst the rank and file that the Supreme Command was a nest of traitors bought by the Germans. We were also told that rations were terrible. Oppressed, we lapsed into a moody silence.

We detrained in the neighbourhood of Kamenets-Podolsk, along with replacements for the 10th Hussars regiment and about a hundred horses for our 10th Dragoons, with all the appropriate accoutrements. We had just about finished when an air alert was sounded. Everyone dived for cover as an enemy reconnaissance aircraft circled a couple of times above us, dropped some small bombs, and headed westward. One soldier was killed and five horses wounded.

This was our baptism of fire. From Kamenets-Podolsk the replacements were marched to the bank of the Dniester, where our division was stationed at the time as part of the reserve of the South-Western Front.

We learned on arrival that Romania had declared war on Germany and would fight on the side of the Russians against the Germans. Rumours were also afloat that our division would soon be dispatched direct to the front lines, but no one knew exactly where.

In early September, our division marched to the hilly and wooded Bystritsa area, where we engaged the enemy, but mostly on foot, for because of the terrain we could not mount cavalry attacks.

The news received grew more and more alarming. Our armies were suffering heavy losses. The offensive had, in effect, petered out, and the armies were checked all along the line. Romanian troops were also having a hard time of it. They had been poorly prepared and badly equipped when they entered the war, and had sustained heavy losses in the very first engagements with the Germans and Austrians.

Resentment in the ranks continued to mount, especially after news reached them from home of starvation and terrible dislocation. In fact, what we saw in Ukrainian, Bukovina and Moldavian front-line villages spoke volumes. Under the yoke of the tsar, whose mad recklessness had

plunged them into a bloody war, the peasants had reached the end of their tether. The soldiers were already aware that they were being sacrificed in the interest of the powers-that-be, in the interests of those who oppressed them.

In October 1916, I had bad luck. While on a reconnaissance patrol at the approaches to Saya-Regen, two comrades of mine were heavily injured by an exploding mine while I was unhorsed by the blast and stunned. I came to in hospital some 24 hours later. Because of the shell-shock I was evacuated to Kharkov, where I was confined to hospital. I was discharged from hospital still feeling weak and with impaired hearing. The medics assigned me to a combat squadron in Lageri where our draft had been staying since spring. I was delighted.

I had left the squadron a young soldier. I was now returning with my NCO stripes, combat experience, and two St. George Crosses received for capturing a German officer and for the wounding.

Chatting with the men, I could see that they had not the slightest desire to taste battle. Uppermost in their minds were thoughts of land and peace. Towards the close of 1916, there were more and more insistent rumours of factory strikes in St. Petersburg, Moscow and elsewhere. The Bolsheviks, as we heard, were struggling against the tsar to secure peace, liberty and land for the toiling folk. By now the soldiers themselves were also demanding an end to the war. True, so far they talked of it among themselves, in secret.

Though I was an NCO, the privates trusted me and we often discussed serious topics. Of course I was still politically naive, but I knew that the war was good for the rich only, and that none but the Bolsheviks could give the Russian people peace, land and liberty. I tried to impress this on my subordinates as best I could. And was rewarded for it.

Here was how it happened.

At daybreak on February 27, 1917, our squadron, which was still quartered in Lageri, was alerted. We lined up near the lodgings of our squadron commander, Captain Baron von der Goltz. Nobody knew what was up. I asked our platoon commander, Lieutenant Kievsky:

"Sir, where are we going?"

He countered with the question: "And where do you think we're going?"

I said the men should be told where they were going, all the more since we had been issued live ammunition.

"Well, the ammo may come in handy."

At that moment von der Goltz himself appeared. Though a gallant soldier who had been awarded a gold sword, the soldier's Order of St. George and many other military decorations, he was repulsive as a person, savage towards the soldiers who disliked and feared him.

He greeted the squadron, lined up our column of horse three abrest, set a fast pace, and we headed for the headquarters of the 5th Reserve Cavalry Regiment in Balakleya. Here we saw that the Dragoons and Hussars were lined up on the parade ground. We also fell into formation. More squadrons were trotting up. All were still in the dark as to what was happening.

Soon everything became clear. From around a street corner appeared a demonstration carrying red banners. Spurring on his horse, our squadron commander, followed by other squadron commanders galloped towards regimental headquarters, from which a group of officers and factory workers had emerged.

In stentorian tones, a tall cavalryman addressed the soldiers. He said that the working class, the peasants and the soldiers no longer recognized Tsar Nicholas II and the capitalists and landowners. The Russian people, he said, wanted an end to the slaughter of the imperialist war; they wanted peace, land and liberty. He wound up his brief speech shouting, "Down with tsarism and the war! Long live peace among the peoples, long live the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies! Hurrah!"

Though there had been no command, the soldiers knew what they should do. They shouted and cheered, mingling with the demonstration.

Later we learned that von der Goltz and several other officers had been arrested by the soldiers' committee which came out into the open, and started off by imprisoning those who might obstruct the triumphant march of the revolution.

The troops were at once ordered to return to their quarters

and await further instructions from the soldiers' committee. It was headed by the Bolshevik Yakovlev (unfortunately I forgot his first name). Next morning an officer came from him to tell us to delegate representatives to the regimental Soviet and elect our own squadron soldiers' committee. I was unanimously elected its chairman. Lieutenant Kievsky, a soldier from the first squad whose name I have forgotten, and myself were elected as delegates to the regimental Soviet.

In early March we had a generel meeting of the regimental Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies in Balakleya. Yakovlev spoke very well of the immediate tasks and the need to cement unity between the soldiers, workers and peasants in the struggle for the revolution. We wholeheartedly acclaimed him.

His place on the rostrum was taken by an ensign. He spoke most eloquently at first, and seemingly for the revolution, but in the end he called on us to support the Provisional Government and to mobilize to repulse the enemy. He was hissed and when the membership of the regimental Soviet was put to the vote, only supporters of the Bolshevik platform were elected.

In May, Yakovlev left us. After his departure the Soviet deteriorated and was gradually taken over by Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, who supported the Provisional Government. As a result, in early autumn 1917 some of our units sided with the Ukrainian counter-revolutionary Petlyura.

The squadron committee disbanded our cavalry unit — made up mostly of people from Moscow and Kaluga. We issued the soldiers with papers to certify that they had been demobilized, but advised them to keep their carbines and ammunition. Later we learned that near Kharkov a road block disarmed most of the men. I had to spend several weeks in hiding in Balakleya and Lageri, because officers now serving with the Ukrainian nationalists were looking for me.

On November 30, 1917, I got back to Moscow where in October power had passed into the dependable hands of the Bolshevik workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies.

I spent December 1917 and January 1918 at home with my relatives. I thought that after a little rest I would join the

Red Guards[1]. In early February, however, I contracted typhus and in April went down with relapsing fever. I was thus unable to join the Red Army until six months later, enlisting in the 4th Regiment of the 1st Moscow Cavalry Division.

At that time the Communist Party and the Soviet Government were tackling a vital and difficult task — that of demobilizing the old army and creating a new one, an army of workers and peasants. Democratization of the army was also underway. Control was being handed over to soldiers' committees and Soviets, all servicemen were given equal rights, and the commanders, up to regimental level, were elected by general meetings. Many capable soldiers and sailors, and officers as well who had gone over to the Soviet side, became prominent Red Army commanders.

"Should it ever become possible to make an impartial evaluation of the situation in our army during the revolution," said a report of the Military Department of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, "it will be clear to anyone that it was complete democratization of the army and the recognition of the power of the army organizations elected by the mass of the soldiers coupled with the peace policy pursued by the Council of People's Commissars that held the armies at the fronts until the middle of the winter of 1918 and saved the country from an irresistible spontaneous retreat of troops to the rear."

The Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets held in January 1918 unanimously voted for the establishment of armed forces. The Congress adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Working and Exploited People written by Lenin, which said, in particular: "To ensure the sovereign power of the working people, and to eliminate all possibility of the restoration of the power of the exploiters, the arming of the working people, the creation of a socialist Red Army of workers and peasants

[1] In 1917, units of armed workers devoted to the revolution were known as Red Guards. The Bolsheviks had begun training the Red Guards shortly before the armed uprising in October 1917 (Old Style). Bolshevik influence spread rapidly in the front lines, the bigger rear garrisons, and the Baltic Fleet. During and after the revolution, the Red Guards were unified and supervised by the military branch of the Bolshevik Party's Central Committee.— *Ed.*

and the complete disarming of the propertied classes are hereby decreed."[1]

The first formation of the Red Army was activated in January 1918, in Petrograd, of many hundreds of Red Guards and soldiers of the reserve regiments of the Petrograd garrison. That was the 1st Corps of the Red Army. At the same time, the first unit of the socialist army of 1,000 Red Guards left Petrograd for the Western Front. Speaking at the send-off meeting, Vladimir Lenin said: "I greet you as the first heroic volunteers of the socialist army who are to build a mighty revolutionary army."[2]

To be accepted, each volunteer had to produce recommendations of army unit committees, Party or other public organizations supporting Soviet power. When whole groups volunteered, a collective reference was required. Red Army men were fully provided for by the state and also received 50 roubles a month, and later, from the middle of 1918, 150 roubles in the case of single men and 250 roubles in the case of married men. In the spring of 1918 the Red Army numbered nearly 200,000 men, but later the influx of volunteers began subsiding.

The staffing of the army exclusively with volunteers had its disadvantages: lack of combat reserves, no system of replacements training, the personnel had no experience in large-scale operations, the men and commanders were poorly trained.

In view of this the All-Russia Executive Committee passed a decree establishing universal military training in the country. Every working man aged 18 to 40 was obliged to complete a 96-hour course of military training without leaving his main occupation, register himself as a reservist, and join the Red Army at the first call of the Soviet Government.

The Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party obliged Party members immediately to begin military training. Election of commanders was abolished. Commanders were appointed and approved by military authorities from among

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, 1972, p. 424 (here and hereafter Progress Publishers, Moscow).

[2] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 420.

persons who had had military schooling or had distinguished themselves in battle. The Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets passed a resolution on building up the Red Army and approving the Party and Government measures setting up a regular army. The resolution stressed the need for centralized control of the army and the importance of iron revolutionary discipline of the troops.

The Congress legislatively entrenched the institution of military commissars initiated back in October 1917 when commissars of the Military-Revolutionary Committee were sent to many old army units and some military establishments. The military commissars, relying on the Party cells in the troops, educated and instructed the soldiers, controlled the actions of military experts, at the same time inculcating confidence in honest and devoted specialists among the soldier masses. We shall have occasion to speak of the commissars further. I would like to stress at this point that they were, as a rule, irreproachable Communists, men of exemplary integrity and devotion.

The Congress of Soviets called for the Red Army to be built in accordance with military science, making use of the experience of old military experts and at the same time training on a broad scale commanders from among workers and peasants. The directives of the Fifth Congress of Soviets and the All-Russia Executive Committee were implemented by Party organizations, trade unions, committees of poor peasants, and the mass of conscientious workers and peasants.

As a result, by the time I joined the Red Army it was already over half a million strong. At that difficult time, the Party took numerous decisions on military questions and carried out immense practical work, laying the foundations of the Soviet Armed Forces and strengthening the proletarian, politically conscious nucleus of the Red Army and Navy on which it relied in the subsequent upbuilding of the armed forces.

## Chapter 3

# I TAKE PART IN THE CIVIL WAR

The tsarist government had brought the country to utter ruin. The situation was further aggravated by the occupation of vital economic regions by interventionist and rebel white guard troops.

They were closing in on the young Soviet Republic, which was fighting for survival. Those who lived, worked and fought arms in hand for the ideals of the October Revolution will always remember those difficult days.

The Brest-Litovsk peace dashed the hopes of the imperialists all over the world to destroy the Soviet Republic by means of the German army. But the British, French, US and Japanese imperialists did not desist in their attempts to tear down the Soviet state. In the spring of 1918, the Entente forces landed in the North and the Far East. The Japanese, and then also US and British troops, seized hold of Vladivostok. In May, the organizers of the intervention provoked the Czechoslovak Corps to rise against the Soviets; it mounted armed actions against the Red Army in the Urals, Siberia, and the Volga region. Seats of the intervention appeared in other parts of the country. Encouraged by foreign aid, the Russian whiteguards went on the offensive.

The German imperialists, too, joined the fight against the Soviet Republic. Breaching the terms of the Brest-Litovsk peace, they overran the Baltic provinces, Byelorussia and the Ukraine, invaded the Don lands, occupied Rostov-on-Don and other points, and handed power over to former tsarist generals in the Ukraine and along the Don.

The strong wave of anger against the occupation forces broke the spirit of the German interventionist troops. Ger-

many's defeat in the First World War and the revolution that broke out there on its heels, spelled an end to the German imperialists' policy of conquest in our country. The Soviet *troops, helped by partisans, drove the Germans out of the* Ukraine, Byelorussia, and the Baltic provinces.

But now, after Germany's defeat, the Entente imperialists could make use of the forces they had in Europe against the world's first socialist state. In addition to the troops that had already thrust into Russia, they sent tens of thousands more into Soviet territory. "The first stage [of the international intervention in the affairs of the Soviet Republic — *G. Zh.*], naturally the most convenient and easiest for the Entente countries," Lenin wrote, "involved their attempt to settle matters with Soviet Russia by using their own troops."[1]

But soon the interventionists realized that they would not be able to cope on their own, and redoubled their aid to the counter-revolution inside the country. In November 1918, *they appointed the tsarist admiral Kolchak "supreme ruler of* Russia". In the south of the country, they managed to unite counter-revolutionaries under the command of the tsarist general Denikin. The Soviet Republic was in deadly peril.

In the second half of 1918, the whiteguard and the imperialist troops in Russia numbered almost one million well-trained and well-armed officers and men.

Explaining the danger to which the Soviet Republic was then exposed, *Lenin and the Party called on the working* people to intensify their effort in strengthening the defences of the country and to rise against the counter-revolutionaries. *In September 1918, the All-Russia Central Executive Com*mittee issued a decree declaring the Soviet Republic a military camp, and in November the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defence was set up, headed by Lenin, to coordinate the activities of the military department, the other agencies concerned with defence, and the Extraordinary Commission for the supply of the Red Army. The Council also dealt with major problems of building up armed forces and providing them with all necessary supplies and equipment. Its particular mission was to find and collect the weapons and other

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, 1974, p 209.

war materials which had remained from the tsarist army, to mobilize the country's industry and to unify the efforts of the front and the rear.

War Communism[1] was introduced. It was the only possible policy if the young Soviet Republic was to vanquish its foes.

Thanks to the heroic efforts of the Soviet people in the tense struggle, the plans of the interventionists and whiteguards for 1918 collapsed. The imperialists had no choice but to withdraw from some of the regions of the Soviet Republic.

In 1919, the many enemies of Soviet power mounted a fresh offensive. The number of war theatres rose to six, and the total length of the frontlines was something like 8,000 kilometres. The enemies tried to crush the young Soviet Republic in an iron ring. The Civil War reached its apogee. The Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defence and the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic did their utmost to carry into effect Lenin's plan for a mass regular army.

By the beginning of 1919, the Red Army comprised 42 infantry divisions equipped with rifles, Maxim machine-guns, revolvers and hand grenades. The cavalry had 40,000 sabres, and there were 1,700 field guns. The armoured forces were expanding. They included the old Russian army's armoured trains (each consisting of an armoured locomotive, two armoured firing platforms, and two or three safety platforms), and detachments of armoured cars — 150 such vehicles each. The air force had some 450 planes, and the navy had 2 battleships, 2 cruisers, 24 destroyers, 6 submarines, 8 minelayers, 11 transports and other vessels. There were also river and lake flotillas.

The high military command was improved, and measures were also taken to improve the organization and functioning of army logistics and the medical service, and to expand the network of commander training courses.

The armed forces were, of course, rather small, and the Red Army's ability to overcome a superior and better armed

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[1] *War Communism* is the name given to the economic policy of the Soviet Republic in the setting of economic dislocation and the Civil War of 1918-1920, with the central purpose of marshalling all forces and resources for defence.— *Ed.*

enemy may be appreciated only if one takes into account the far-sightedness and efficiency of the Party, and Lenin's guidance of the country, the revolutionary dedication, tremendous patriotism and the exceptionally high morale of the workers and peasants who fought for the freedom and independence of their new, socialist homeland.

In early 1919, Admiral Kolchak's army was holding a front in the east from Perm to Orsk. The Ural white Cossack army was positioned at Uralsk and occupied Guryev, General Denikin's white armies stood ready for battle along the Terek River and held Novocherkassk, Rostov-on-Don, Yuzovka and other towns in the Donets Basin. Troops of the Entente and the Ukrainian counter-revolutionary government known as the Directory, having captured the Ukraine, entrenched themselves along a line running through Kherson, Nikolayev, Zhitomir, and Korosten. Counterrevolutionary Latvians held positions from Schaulen (now Siauliai) to Mitau (now Jelgava), while the troops of General Yudenich and white Estonians were threatening Petrograd from Valmiera and Narva. The white Finns, the whiteguards and the interventionists had occupied the north and were preparing to strike at Petrograd, Vologda and Kotlas. Interventionist forces also occupied Krasnovodsk, Batumi, Novorossiisk, Sebastopol and Odessa.

The imperialist governments were out to overthrow Soviet power, and had come to an agreement on dismembering Russia. The Ukraine, Byelorussia, the Baltic regions, the Caucasus, parts of the North and other vital regions were to be torn away from the rest of the country.

By the spring of 1919, Admiral Kolchak had 300,000 well-armed men, mainly well-to-do peasants, counter-revolutionary Cossacks from the Transbaikal region and Siberia, and white Cossacks from the Orenburg steppes and the Urals.

In the rear of Kolchak's army were concentrated 150,000 interventionist troops from the United States, Britain, and Japan.

The Western governments were supplying Denikin's army with large quantities of arms and ammunition. The General himself had been proclaimed "deputy supreme ruler". This stressed the military role of Denikin's army and his personal significance.

By the spring of 1919, the Red Army had grown considerably, numbering about 1,800,000. Of these 400,000 fairly well-armed men were in the front lines. They had had good training and some substantial combat experience. The Red Army men knew what they were fighting for, and understood the aims of the interventionists and the whiteguards.

True, the Kolchak, Denikin and other white armies were better equipped than the Red Army. They received an abundance of arms, munitions, equipment and materiel of all kinds from the Entente. The soldiers were better clad and also had ample food supplies.

Though the situation in the Soviet Republic had somewhat improved, on the whole it was still difficult.

The four-year imperialist war had ravaged the agricultural country which had a poorly developed industry. Due to a lack of manpower and raw materials many factories had come to a standstill back in tsarist times. The bulk of the iron ore, coal, oil, and cotton, approximately three-quarters of the pig iron, steel and sugar, and most of the wheat were produced in areas occupied by the interventionists and whiteguards. It took the truly heroic efforts of the Party and the people to supply the Red Army. The scanty material and technical resources were directed to places where at any given time the future of the country was at stake. There was an acute shortage of metals, fuels, clothes, and bread.

Our cavalry regiment was heading for the Eastern Front, and trained at a place called Yershov. I remember how the Red Army men, who were half-starved in Moscow, rushed straight from the goods wagons to the local market. They bought big round loaves of bread and wolfed them down on the spot. Many were taken ill. That was understandable, for in Moscow they were getting only a quarter of a pound of bad-quality bread a day and some cabbage soup cooked with horsemeat or salt fish.

Knowing how the working people of Moscow and Petrograd and the other towns were starving and how poorly the Red Army was supplied, we were filled with a class hatred for kulaks, counter-revolutionary Cossacks and interventionists. This instilled in the Red Army men a sense of hatred of the enemy and prepared them for the decisive battles.

In March 1919 began the offensive of Kolchak's troops on the Eastern Front. To oppose the enemy we had no more than 100,000 troops there, and to make things worse they were stretched out over a wide front. Yet the stubborn resistance of the 2nd and 3rd Red Armies foiled Admiral Kolchak's plans. His Siberian Army in a month and a half advanced only 80-130 km (50-80 miles), taking the towns of Sarapul and Votkinsk.

Kolchak's Western Army launched its offensive on the heels of the Siberian Army. The fighting was especially bitter at the approaches to the town of Ufa where the 26th and 27th Rifle divisions of the 5th Army of our Eastern Front were putting up a strong resistance. Still, the Kolchak people captured Ufa on March 14. In the fierce battle at the approaches to the town the 5th Army suffered heavy losses: up to half of its men were listed as killed, wounded or missing. The army was then under the command of Zh. K. Blümberg. In early April, M. N. Tukhachevsky, a former lieutenant who had joined the Communist Party in April 1918, took over.

The situation on the Eastern Front was badly aggravated as a result of kulak revolts instigated by the Socialist-Revolutionaries (S.R.s). Revolts had broken out in the Samara, Syzran, Sengilei, Stavropol and Melekess uyezds. The revolts were soon put down but they had a serious effect on the situation since a large number of our troops were diverted to deal with them.

Despite heavy losses, the 5th Army, supported by detachments of armed railwaymen and other workers, was containing the enemy. Until April 1, Kolchak's Western Army was unable to achieve its objectives and sustained heavy casualties.

At the beginning of April, the counter-revolutionary Orenburg Cossack army under Dutov captured the town of Aktyubinsk, and cut the Orenburg-Tashkent railway line, isolating Turkestan from Soviet Russia once more. The advance of the whites on Orenburg sparked off kulak uprisings in Cossack villages along the Ural River.

By mid-April the whites were 85 km (53 miles) from Kazan and Samara, and 100 km (62 miles) from Simbirsk. Any further withdrawal of the Red Army to the western bank of the Volga would have led to the linking up of Kolchak's armies

with those of Denikin, and to the emergence of a single front, enabling them to deliver a combined blow at Moscow. The thrusts of the interventionists and whiteguards in other strategic directions made the situation still more complicated.

At this grave moment the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) headed by Lenin called on its members and the Soviet people to do their utmost to defeat the enemy, and above all the Kolchak armies.

The Communists, the working class, and all progressives in the country, responded to the Party's call.

On April 11, the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee of the Party approved the theses of the CC RCP (B) in connection with the situation on the Eastern Front, written by Lenin. The Central Committee at its plenary meeting on April 13 and the Political Bureau at its meetings on April 23 and 29 discussed the problem of aiding the Eastern Front. It was decided to carry out a new mobilization of Party members and to send the most courageous and battle-hardened Communists to the front. On May 13, Lenin made a report on ammunition supply at the meeting of the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defence. Earlier, on Lenin's proposal, 81,000 workers of the major munitions factories were to be given Red Army rations, while all workers employed in the defence industry were exempted from military service. The tide of tremendous popular revolutionary enthusiasm and the tireless organizational activities of the Party ensured gradual progress in military production.

The mobilization of men and resources throughout the country made it possible to send considerable reinforcements to the battleweary armies on the Eastern Front. Nearly 15,000 Communists alone went to the front, most of them as rank-and-file soldiers. This was a decisive political force, knitting our troops together in the struggle against the enemy.

Today, studying the measures and plans of the High Command of the Red Army and the Command of the Eastern Front, one realizes that their knowledge of the deployment of the white forces was inadequate. They failed to see through the designs of the adversary and to organize strong resistance.

This state of affairs changed when M. V. Frunze was sent to the Eastern Front to take over command of the Southern

Group. Frunze was quite right in deciding that in the obtaining grave situation it was essential to seize the strategic initiative from the whites without delay, to undermine their morale, and to strengthen our troops' confidence in victory.

With the farsightedness of a truly great military leader, Frunze realized that despite the enemy's successes certain adverse circumstances had appeared for the whites and that if full advantage were taken of them this could mean the beginning of the end for Kolchak.

Frunze reckoned that while containing Kolchak's armies in the centre, a task force consisting of the Turkestan Army, the 1st and a part of the 4th Red armies was immediately to strike hard at Kolchak's overstretched left flank. The counterblow was then to be developed into a sweeping counteroffensive along the entire Eastern Front with the aim of liberating the Urals and Siberia.

Frunze took into account both the weakness of Kolchak's troops on the left flank and the fact that Kolchak could not move his main forces quickly enough because they were involved in the centre of the front, pushing in the direction of Kazan, Simbirsk and Samara in a bid to reach the Volga.

Lenin commended Frunze's plan, and the Party's Central Committee and the Revolutionary Military Council endorsed it.

Frunze was never afraid of assuming responsibility and facing up to difficulties when the fate of the country was at stake. In a very short time he managed to regroup the southern troops under his command, to bring them up to full strength and ensure their all-round preparedness. This was no easy job at the time owing to the general state of ruin and the nearly complete breakdown of the railways.

Here is what Frunze wrote in his memoirs about the situation on the Eastern Front:

"The Kolchak forces were already close to the Volga. We had great difficulty in holding Orenburg which was surrounded on three sides. The army defending the town was ready to withdraw. To the south of Samara the Ural Cossacks had broken through and were moving north, threatening Samara and the Samara-Orenburg railway line. We were retreating almost everywhere, but I cannot say that we felt ourselves to be the weaker side. But since the initiative was in the

hands of the whites and their blows followed one after the other, binding our will, we did not feel particularly comfortable. To launch an offensive required tremendous will power and also the deep conviction that only such an offensive could change the situation. At that time we had to take into account not only the morale of the units that wanted to retreat, but also pressure from above, from the High Command, then in the hands of Vatcietis. He was in favour of continuing the withdrawal... Despite all this we went over to the offensive. This was the beginning of a brilliant operation which led to the complete defeat of Kolchak."

After the defeat of the whites near Bugulma and Belebei, and the rout of Kolchak at Ufa, desertion among the white troops increased sharply and the partisan movement expanded.

The superintendent of Kolchak's War Ministry, Baron Budberg, wrote in his diary in May 1919: "...There is no doubt that on the front held by the Western Army the initiative has passed into the hands of the Reds. Our offensive has petered out and the army is rolling back, incapable of making a stand... During the retreat the men recruited locally return to their villages, taking along their uniforms, equipment and sometimes, arms... The Reds have a tremendous advantage insofar as they are not afraid of replenishing their ranks with old soldiers who need no training, whereas we would be scared stiff to do such a thing and are obliged to call up beardless lads of 18 and 19..."

Further on he writes: "The front is cracking up and rolling back. We have to ask ourselves whether we shall be able to hold the Urals."

During the successful counter-offensive on the Eastern Front, a difficult situation arose at Uralsk. The white Cossacks were besieging the town and had cut it off from the troops of the Southern Group. The defenders put up a stubborn resistance and did not surrender Uralsk to the enemy. However, the garrison was in a precarious position. Lenin, who attentively followed all events on the Eastern Front, sent Frunze a telegram on June 16:

"Please convey to the Uralsk comrades my warm greetings for the heroes of the fifty days' defence of besieged Uralsk, and my request not to get down-hearted, and to hold out

just a few more weeks. The heroic defence of Uralsk will be crowned with success."[1]

Frunze at once ordered the 25th Chapayev Division to come to the aid of Uralsk. The renowned division under that legendary commander, V. I. Chapayev, set out to relieve the town.

The First Moscow Cavalry Division, in which I was serving at that time, came under the command of M. V. Frunze. On reaching the railway station Shipovo we learnt that the Chapayev division had already got to Uralsk. Our troops were in fine spirits. Everyone was sure the counter-revolutionary Ural Cossacks would be smashed.

Our regiment first engaged the enemy at the approaches to Shipovo. The enemy offered fierce resistance. Positions changed hands many times. The whites outnumbered us. I recall a fierce hand-to-hand fight near the railway station.

Some eight hundred mounted Cossacks attacked us. When they were almost on us, a squadron with a cannon dashed out from behind the embankment. The gunners, daring lads, turned the gun around at the gallop and opened fire on the whites' flank. The Cossacks were thrown into confusion. The accurate artillery fire continued, causing the enemy great losses. Finally the whites gave up and turned tail. Our success raised the morale of our cavalrymen.

Exceptionally fierce fighting flared up during the first days of June. Units of our division fought bravely, but their advance in the direction of Uralsk was slow.

At this time good tidings flashed from unit to unit. Chapayev's troops had routed the whites, entered the town, and joined the heroic garrison of Uralsk.

I had the good fortune of seeing M. V. Frunze who was personally in command during the fighting for Uralsk.

Frunze, who was going to the 25th Chapayev Division together with V. V. Kuibyshev, stopped in the field and talked with the soldiers of our regiment. He showed an interest in their sentiments, food supplies, and arms. He asked them what their relatives back in the villages were writing. He wanted to know whether the army men had any requests. His straightforward

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[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 35, 1982, p. 400.

manner, charm, and pleasing appearance won the soldiers' hearts.

Frunze spoke with particular warmth and affection about Lenin. He told us how concerned Lenin was about the situation in the Urals.

"Things are going not badly now," he said. "The white Ural Cossacks have been smashed and very soon we shall definitely finish off the rest of the counter-revolutionaries. We'll finish off Kolchak and free the Urals, Siberia and other regions from the interventionists and whites. Then we shall rebuild our country!"

We often recalled that meeting with M. V. Frunze.

Up to March 1919 I was one of a group of sympathizers who were preparing to become members of the Communist Party. At that time there was no such thing as a probationary membership. I am still grateful to Trofimov, secretary of the regimental Party committee, and to commissar Volkov who helped me get a better understanding of the Rules and Programme of the Communist Party, and prepare for joining the Party.

In our squadron there were only five sympathizers, but although there were so few of us, Trofimov and Volkov used to come at least twice a week to tell us about the situation at home and abroad, and about what the Party was doing to organize the military effort at various fronts. These were long and interesting talks, especially when they dealt with the Bolsheviks' struggle against tsarism and with the fierce fighting in Petrograd, Moscow and other industrial centres during the October Revolution.

At that time the Party-political apparatus of the Red Army was still only taking shape, but the army and navy already had more than 7,000 commissars actively assisted by the Party cells consisting of over 50,000 Communists. Much, however, remained to be done: it was necessary to specify the duties of commissars, to ensure the uniformity of Party bodies

zations were relieved of their control over the army, a responsibility they had during the initial period of building up the armed forces.

Military commissars and political departments of the Revolutionary Military Councils of the army and navy implemented Party policy in the armed forces, the political departments being bodies of military administration subordinated to the command, and at the same time Party bodies subordinated to the Party and uniting the Communists in the army.

On March 1,1919, I was admitted to the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). I have forgotten many things, but I will remember the day I joined the Party as long as I live. Since then I have tried to suit all my thoughts, aspirations and actions to the demands made of a Party member. And when it came to fighting our country's enemies, I bore in mind the Party demand that a Communist must be a model of selfless service to the people

Soon the units of our division were sent from the Shipovo area to mop up the white bands near Nikolayevsk. And in August 1919, our 4th Cavalry Regiment was transferred to the railway station Vladimirovka. The division had not yet been involved in full-scale military operations and was engaged in combat training.

There I met the commissar of the division, Georgi Vasilyevich, whose surname was the same as my own, Zhukov. One early morning, passing the quadrangle, I noticed somebody exercising a horse. It was the commissar. Since I knew something about horses and horsemanship I wanted to see what the commissar was worth.

Without paying any attention to me the commissar, dripping sweat, was trying to put the horse into a gallop with the left leg forward. But try as he might, the horse would occasionally put the right leg forward instead of the left. I could not keep from shouting:

"Tighten the left rein!"

The commissar reined in his horse, rode up to me, and dismounted.

"All right, you have a go," was all he said.

There was nothing for me to do but to adjust the stirrups and mount. Having made the horse trot in a circle a couple of times,

so as to get the feel of it, I took a firm grip on the reins and put the horse into a gallop, left leg forward. I completed one circle and everything was all right. Then another and again everything went well. I made the horse change over to the right leg and again to the left — it did not falter.

"You have to press the horse tighter with your calves."

The commissar chuckled and asked, "How many years have you been riding?"

"Four years. Why?"

"Nothing. Not a bad seat you've got."

We began to chat. The commissar asked when I had joined the army and where I had fought, when I had come to this division and when I had joined the Party. He told me about himself, saying he had served in the cavalry for ten years. He had been a member of the Party since 1917, and had brought over to the Red Army almost a whole cavalry regiment from the tsarist army. It was evident that he was a really devoted commissar.

It is worth mentioning that one of the first instructions defining the duties of commissars was worked out in the political department of our Southern Group, commanded by Frunze. It said in the instructions that military commissars, as representatives of the Workers' and Peasants' Government, should implement in the army the ideas and policy of Soviet power, protect the interests of workers and peasants against possible encroachments by hostile elements, help strengthen the revolutionary discipline, and ensure that orders are carried out implicitly.

Carrying on propaganda and agitation was not the only thing the commissar had to do. His prime duty was to be a model for the soldiers in everything, especially in battle. He was obliged to know all operational and tactical instructions, take part in working out orders (in operational issues the decision rested with the commander), and study warcraft. Before battle, commissars used to gather political workers and rank-and-file Communists to detail the combat missions set by the commander. In battle, one would always find them in the most dangerous and decisive places. Military commissars have covered themselves with glory in the Civil War and deservedly stand out as legendary figures.

I met Commissar G. V. Zhukov several times later, and we discussed the situation at the fronts and in the country in general. One day he suggested that I should go over to political work. I thanked him but explained that I inclined more to the military side. Then he recommended my going to study at courses for Red commanders. I was eager to go, but the plan fell through.

At that time the nearby village of Zaplavnoye was suddenly captured by the whites who had forced the Volga somewhere between Cherny Yar and Tsaritsyn. We engaged the enemy. It was no time for studying.

After the defeat of Kolchak and the retreat into Siberia of what was left of his armies, the Entente still did not abandon its scheme of destroying the Soviet Republic. Now all their hopes were pinned on General Denikin. His troops were being regularly supplied with arms, ammunition and food from the West.

The French and British governments formed several units of former whiteguard officers who had fled abroad and of Russian soldiers from POW camps in Germany. The German authorities, indeed, made it a condition for Russian soldiers who wanted to return home that they join "volunteer detachments" to fight the Red Army.

This venture came to nothing. The majority of such "volunteers" seized on the first opportunity to go over to our side. Only those fought who hated Soviet rule and considered it their deadly enemy. But such embittered anti-Soviet elements were not numerous.

Still, in the summer of 1919, Denikin's armies were a large and dangerous force. Some of their units consisted exclusively of officers. While regarding Denikin as its trump card, the Entente still cherished illusions about Kolchak's army, trying to put it on its feet, so as to throw it against the Red Army from the east at the right moment. In the north, a white army under Miller was being primed for a new campaign. That army, too, was receiving plentiful supplies. Entente ships sailing back home were loaded with furs, fish, timber and other valuable Russian goods.

In the north-west the army of General Yudenich and the white Finns were preparing for an attack on Petrograd. In

this campaign the Entente hoped to enlist all the small countries bordering on the Soviet state.

Uprisings, revolts and acts of sabotage were being engineered in the rear with the help of the counter-revolutionary organizations of the Mensheviks, SRs, bourgeois nationalists, and kulaks. Transportation of troops to the front by rail was being disrupted, as were shipments of food, arms and other vital items.

The Party organized a workers' march to the villages for food. They were backed up by the village poor, who formed what were called Poor Peasants' Committees under the All-Russia Central Executive Committee's decree of June 11, 1918.

Lenin wrote at the time:

"Either the advanced and class-conscious workers triumph and unite the poor peasant masses around themselves, establish rigorous order, a mercilessly severe rule, a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat — either they compel the kulak to submit, and institute a proper distribution of food and fuel on a national scale;— or the bourgeoisie, with the help of the kulaks, and with the indirect support of the spineless and muddle-headed (the anarchists and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries), will overthrow Soviet power and set up a Russo-German or a Russo-Japanese Kornilov, who will present the people with a sixteen-hour working day, an ounce of bread per week, mass shooting of workers and torture in dungeons, as has been the case in Finland and the Ukraine.

"Either — or.

"There is no middle course.

"The situation of the country is desperate in the extreme."[1]

Anti-Soviet agents [illegible]

[illegible] some success at times, particularly in areas where economic dislocation had become extreme and where gross violations of Soviet law were causing certain part of the population to waver.

At this point, I want to cite a letter I received when stationed near Tsaritsyn. I still have it. It was from Pavel Zhukov, a childhood friend.

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, 1977, p. 394.

Dear friend Georgi,

Since you left for the Red Army nearly all our friends and acquaintances have been called up. Again I have had no luck. Instead of sending me to the army on active service, they sent me to Voronezh province to serve on a food surplus-appropriation detachment — squeezing grain out of the kulaks. Of course, that is also necessary, but I am a soldier; I know how to fight and consider that my work here could be done by anybody who has not gone through the war. But that is not what I want to write you about.

"You remember our arguments and disagreements concerning the Socialist-Revolutionaries. At that time I considered them to be friends of the people who were fighting against tsarism in the interests of the people, and of the peasants, too. Now I agree with you. They are scoundrels. They are not friends of the people, but of the kulaks, they are the organizers of all the anti-Soviet and bandit outrages.

"The other day the local kulaks, led by a Socialist-Revolutionary in hiding, fell on the guards accompanying a horse-drawn caravan of grain and dealt with them in a bestial way. They killed my best friend, Kolya Gavrilov. He comes from somewhere near Maloyaroslavets. They gouged out the eyes of another of my friends, Semyon Ivanishin. They also chopped off his right hand and left him on the road. He's in a bad way. Gangrene. Most likely he'll die. It's a shame! He was a good-looking lad and a great dancer. Our unit vowed to take vengeance on that scum and to give them what they deserve, so they won't forget it till their dying day.

Your friend,

Pavel."

For a long time after receiving that letter I heard nothing about my friend Pavel Zhukov. In 1922, I learned that he had been murdered by kulaks somewhere in Tambov province...

Lenin, the Party Central Committee and the government took into account the new, very grave danger threatening from the south and adopted a number of important decisions.

A plenary meeting of the CC RCP(B) held on July 3-4, 1919, concentrated on the problems of the country's defence, particularly the situation on the Southern Front, which was declared the main front of the republic. The most important

results of that plenary meeting were reflected in a Central Committee letter to all Party branches, "All Out For the Fight Against Denikin!" written by Lenin. On July 4, at a Joint Session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the Moscow City Soviet, the All-Russia Council of Trade Unions and representatives of Moscow factory committees, Lenin made a report on "The Present Situation and the Immediate Tasks of Soviet Power". It was then that the question was raised again of taking into the Red Army new contingents of military experts from the tsarist army and showing more consideration for them.

"Hundreds and hundreds of military experts are betraying us and will betray us...", the letter of the Party Central Committee read. "But thousands and tens of thousands of military experts have been working for us systematically and for a long time, and without them we could not have formed the Red Army, which has grown out of the guerrilla force of evil memory, and has been able to score brilliant victories in the East. Experienced people who head our War Department rightly point out that where the Party policy in regard to the military experts and the extirpation of the guerilla spirit has been adhered to most strictly, where discipline is firmest, where political work among the troops and the work of the commissars is conducted most thoroughly, there, generally speaking, the number of military experts inclined to betray us is the lowest, there ... we have no laxity in the army, there its organization and morale are best, and there we have the most victories."[1]

Recalling how we worked together with former tsarist officers, I must say that most of them were honest and decent men faithful to their people and country. When it was necessary to give their lives in battles with the enemy, they did not hesitate, dying with honour, dignity and valour. However, they did have one drawback: they lacked the right approach to the soldier. They kept aloof, unable to find a common language with Red Army men, and only a few managed to combine the qualities of a good commander, chief and elder comrade to the men.

In the Party organization we often discussed relations with former officers and tried to show the greatest possible confi-

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[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, 1977, p. 448.

dence in these military experts. True, there were loudmouths among the Communists, too, who considered that the so-called Military Opposition in the Party had been right in maintaining that the former officers were mostly white guards who would never have kindred feelings for the Soviet system. They identified the army discipline with feudal subordination. But at the Eighth Party Congress the views of the Military Opposition were rejected by the overwhelming majority.

The military experts, who had attentively followed the proceedings of the Congress, realized that the Party had confidence in them, valued them, and would take care of them. They had drawn nearer to the mass of Red Army men and the Party organizations. The commanding personnel from among former tsarist officers became more active and demanding in matters of discipline and military service. This had a favourable effect on the fighting ability and combat preparedness of the troops. Attempts to undermine the trust in the former tsarist officers were cut short by the commissars, the Party-political workers and even the Red Army men themselves.

The Red Army held a special place in the deliberations of the Eighth Party Congress, which was held in March 1919. The Party's line was to complete in the shortest possible time the transition from a voluntary and semi-partisan army to a regular army welded together by strict military discipline and based on a uniform system of recruitment, organization and control. These basic Party principles were set out in Lenin's reports and speeches, in the new Party Programme adopted by the Congress, and a resolution on the military question.

Practice proved the correctness of the decisions of the Eighth Party Congress and the further measures taken by the Party to strengthen the Red Army. They were of tremendous significance, because our enemies were doing everything to strangle the Soviet state.

After the capture of Tsaritsyn, Borisoglebsk, Balashov, Krasnograd and other important towns by Denikin's armies, the Entente began pressing the General to mount an offensive against Moscow. On learning from his secret agents that the Red Army was poised for a counter-offensive, Denikin, in order to foil it, hastened to make a number of concentrated attacks and seize the initiative.

In August 1919, Mamontov's cavalry corps broke through the lines of the 8th Army at Novokhopersk. It emerged in the rear of our Southern Front and started advancing on Tambov where there were large supply depots. Simultaneously, Denikin threw Kutepov's 1st Army Corps into the linking point between the 13th and 14th Armies, and began forcing our units to retreat to Kursk and Vorozhba. Capturing Kursk, Orel and Voronezh after bitter fighting, the enemy headed for Moscow from the south.

In this difficult situation, the Communist Party and its Central Committee under Lenin redoubled its energy and managed by political and military means to summon additional strength and to repulse the white armies. The Red Army defeated the enemy in a counter-thrust at Orel and Voronezh, thus turning the tables on Denikin, and also routed Yudenich at the approaches to Petrograd. Giving the enemy no rest, the Red Army mounted a counter-offensive in a southerly direction. Here, at Tsaritsyn, at Bakhtiyarovka and Zaplavnoye, our 14th Cavalry Regiment also squared off against the enemy's Caucasian [illegible] in the [illegible] too, were being badly bled.

The first half of September passed in fierce engagements and was marked by sudden changes in the fluid situation. Near Tsaritsyn local engagements were in progress in October, and we only had a general idea of the important developments then about to occur on the Moscow sector.

In hand-to-hand fighting with white Kalmyk troops between Zaplavnoye and Akhtuba I was wounded when a hand grenade exploded. The splinters went deep into my left side and thigh, and I was sent to a hospital, where I again succumbed to a bout of typhus. I left the hospital in bad shape, and was granted a month's leave to recuperate.

I spent the furlough with my parents in my native village. The village folk were very badly off but had not lost heart. The poorer villagers had organized committees of poor peasants, which took part in confiscating grain from the kulaks. The middle peasants, despite hardships and the grave situation at the front, were leaning more and more towards the Soviet

power. Only a few of them who were close to the kulaks in the amount of property they owned were opposed to the measures of the Party and government.

Before I knew it, my furlough was over, and I reported to the local military commissariat, asking them to assign me to the active forces. I was not yet quite fit, however, and they sent me to the Tver Reserve Battalion, and later to the Red Commanders' Courses.

The 1st Ryazan Cavalry Courses, where I found myself in January 1920, were located on a former landowner's estate in Starozhilovo, Ryazan province.

The enrolment was chiefly of cavalrymen who had distinguished themselves in combat. I was given the post of trainee sergeant-major, 1st Squadron. I was familiar with the duties involved from my experience in the tsarist army. Squadron commander V. D. Khlamtsev set me the task of instructing trainees in the use of side arms handling (lance and sabre), bayonet fighting, drill and physical training.

Khlamtsev, a former tsarist officer, was always smart and served as a model for the trainees. The man in charge of drill, G. S. Desnitsky, was also good at his job. Old army officers made up the bulk of the commanding personnel. They discharged their duties well, but stuck to routine too closely. The Party organization and the political personnel were in charge of the educational work, while teachers with military training took care of our general education. Political economy was taught by half-baked instructors who often were as much at sea on the subject as we were.

Most of the trainees were weak when it came to general education; they had been enrolled from among workers and peasants who could barely read and write. But they should be given credit for trying hard; they realized they had to learn a lot in a short time to become worthy Red commanders.

One day in mid-July we were ordered to board a train, destination unknown. We only saw we were going in the general direction of Moscow. In Moscow we were billeted in Lefortovo barracks where trainees of the Moscow and Tver courses were already quartered. We were told the courses would be merged into a composite brigade, the Second Moscow Brigade, two infantry and one cavalry regiments and sent against Wrangel.

We were issued combat equipment and arms. Our outfits and the horses' harnesses were all new, and we looked very smart.

I had many friends in Moscow, and wanted to look them up before going to the front — especially one girl, an old flame. Unfortunately, I could not manage to see anyone. As sergeant-major I was usually left in charge by the squadron commanders who often had to be away for various reasons. So I had to be content with writing to the people I knew. Perhaps that was why Maria and I parted ways, and she got married soon. Since then I never saw her.

In August our composite regiment (commander G. P. Khormushko, commissar V. A. Krylov), which was part of the Second Moscow Brigade, was concentrated in Krasnodar, from where we set out to engage Wrangel's forces, and more precisely General Ulagai's landing party.

By the summer of 1920, it became clear that despite its temporary successes, bourgeois-landowner Poland would hardly be able to continue the war with Soviet Russia whose Red Army was already much more than three-million strong. For that reason, the Entente governments decided to organize one more offensive against Soviet Russia with Baron Wrangel's troops that had then been raised in the Crimea, thus backing up the Polish forces.

Wrangel was promised unlimited aid. He, in return, officially pledged to recompense the Entente's outlays and to pay all tsarist debts.

By May 1920, Wrangel's army numbered about 130,000 bayonets and 4.500 sabres. However, this was not enough to resume extensive hostilities against the Soviet Republic. Since Wrangel could not raise reinforcements [illegible] Crimea, he decided to invade Northern Taurida, but [illegible] could not break through to the [illegible] or [illegible]

Wrangel believed that white bandits were widespread in the Kuban area, and pinned his hopes on the so-called Resurrection of Russia Army under General Fostikov. But he overestimated those forces. Indulging in wishful thinking, Wrangel counted on the kulak movement among the Cossacks in the Kuban area.

By that time, however, a considerable part of the Kuban Cossacks had realized what the whiteguards and the "supreme government" financed by the Entente held in store for them.

Our commanders, commissars and soldiers did their best to explain to the Kuban Cossacks the aims of our struggle, and to convince them in the necessity of eliminating the anti-Soviet bands as speedily as possible.

At the same time the poorer Cossack and Red Army men's families were aided in every possible way. This was very important since before the Red Army came, the whites had oppressed the poor, often robbing them of their last loaf of bread and humiliating them in many other ways.

I remember the regimental commissar coming to our squadron one evening and suggesting that we should devote a few days to repairing houses, barns and farm implements for the families of Red Army men and poor families in general. We agreed enthusiastically.

Our commissar V. A. Krylov picked the hardest job — cleaning the public well which the white troops had filled with garbage. The well was a rather deep one, and when he reached the bottom he nearly suffocated. He was pulled out of the well half-dead, but as soon as he got his breath back he ordered us to lower him into the well again. In a short while we had to pull him up once more, and so it went until all the dirt was cleared out of the well. By nightfall the commissar's bravery was the talk of the village.

When all the work was done, the Cossacks invited us to a dinner. They thanked us heartily for our help, but there was also a funny episode, A group of trainees was given the job of repairing a barn and a horse's harness for a Cossack widow. They did it, but for a kulak family who had the same name. Everybody laughed, but the "culprits" were clearly upset.

In August our composite regiment engaged the raiding force of Wrangel's General Ulagai, and then pursued the bands of Fostikov and Kryzhanovsky in the vicinity of the Cossack

township of Urupskaya, Besskorbnaya, and Otradnaya. The bands were soon routed. The survivors sought refuge with the Georgian Menshevik government, while Fostikov himself caped to the Crimea and joined Wrangel.

We were not fated to take part in the mopping-up operations in the Crimea. But some of the better trainees were turned out ahead of time and assigned to cavalry units which had lost a considerable number of their commanders fighting Wrangel's forces.

Graduation took place in the town of Armavir where the 9th Army field headquarters was stationed at the time. The rest the military trainees were sent, as part of a composite re[illegible] in pursuit of bands that had escaped to the Caucasus moun[illegible] Some time later we learned that the regiment had been bushed somewhere in the mountains of Daghestan, and tained heavy losses. The bandits captured many [illegible] and soldiers and tortured them to death. Our commissar, [illegible] had been so popular among us, was also killed.

A considerable number of graduates was assigned to the 14th Detached Cavalry Brigade which was then stationed in the vicinity of Novozherelievskaya, and was engaged in mopping up the remnants of Ulagai's forces and local bands. Together with my friends Gorelov, Mikhailov and Ukhach-Ogorovich, I was assigned to the 1st Cavalry Regiment under Andreyev, an old, battlewise Don Cossack who had the reputation of a fearless fighter.

We reported at headquarters and handed in our papers, and were received by the regimental commander. He looked disapprovingly at our red breeches and said: "My men don't like commanders in red pants."

But there was little we could do about it. Millitary trainees were issued only that kind of breeches, and we had no others. Still a bit distrustful, he continued:

"My soldiers are mostly old hands and we don't care much for greenhorns."

After this anything but encouraging introduction, he began questi[illegible] [illegible]mbership, [illegible] and that some of us had fought in the world war.



The Socialist Homeland Is in Danger!
Lenin addresses troops on parade in Red Square



Mikhail Frunze inspects the troops



Mikhail Kalinin visits a submarine 1919





The First Mounted Army, 1920

Vasily Chapayev, illustrious Civil War army commander (right)

M. N. Tukhachevsky, outstanding Soviet military leader of the Civil War period



V. K. Blucher, prominent Civil War commander, later Marshal of the Soviet Union



N. A. Shchors, an illustrious Civil War commander





The Red Cavalry





A cavalry charge





Mikhail Kalinin hands Semyon Budenny, Commander of the First Mounted Army, and Kliment Voroshilov, Member of the Revolutionary Military Council, a banner of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, 1919

THE SOVIET REPUBLIC'S ARMED FORCES MAKE RAPID STRIDES

Gai, a Civil War veteran





THE SOVIET REPUBLIC'S ARMED FORCES MAKE RAPID STRIDES

Gai, a Civil War veteran





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Postwar rehabilitation of factories and railways



Recruits. Georgi Zhukov, commander [of] the 39th Cavalry Regiment, is in th[e] centre, 1924

We reported to squadron commander Vishnevsky, whom we disliked on sight. He left the impression of someone who did not care much for the affairs of his unit. He did not look up from the book he was reading and did not ask us who we were and what we could do. Nor did he say anything about the men we would have to instruct and perhaps soon lead into battle. He just said without enthusiasm:

"You, Zhukov, take over the 2nd platoon from Agapov; and you, Ukhach-Ogorovich, assume command of the 4th platoon."

I found the 2nd platoon and called on Agapov who had been temporarily acting platoon commander. He was an elderly man, a former rank-and-file cavalryman in the old army who had seen action in the world war. From the very first I felt drawn to this unassuming and friendly man.

From his pocket Agapov brought out the roll of the platoon numbering 30 men, and said:

"Excepting three or four men, all are old soldiers. Excellent fighting men, but a few, of course, are headstrong and you have to know how to handle them."

He went on to describe each one in detail. Gorshkov was sure death with a sabre, always in the lead of the attacking troops, but an unruly fellow and quick to take offense. I had better not speak harshly to him but encourage him, and admonish him in a comradely manner if he got out of line, and not in front of the others. Kasyanov, a native of Voronezh, was a good machine-gunner. He did not have to be told what to do in a fight, for he knew best what target to fire on first. Kazakevich, Kovalev and Saprykin were three bosom-friends, good soldiers but too fond of a good time. I could and should give them a dressing-down in front of the ranks, and perhaps threaten to report them to the regimental commissar, who was a stern man and did not like those who did not honour the name of a Red Army man.

That was how Agapov told me about everyone of my men, and I was most grateful to him.

Then I gave orders for the men to line up mounted so I could get acquainted with them.

I greeted the men, and said:

"See here, comrades, I have been appointed your commander. How good a commander I am and how good you are as soldiers

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remains to be seen. Right now I want to inspect your horses and equipment, and get acquainted with each of you personally."

While inspecting the platoon I noticed that some of the soldiers were casting critical glances at my red breeches. So I said:

"Regimental commander Andreyev has already warned me that you don't like red breeches. But I don't have any others. I wear what the Soviet government gave me, and I'm grateful for it. As for red, as you know, it is the revolutionary colour symbolizing the working people's struggle for freedom and independence."

The next day I invited the platoon to my hut and asked the men to tell me about themselves. This did not come off very well.

"What is there to tell?" machine-gunner Kasyanov said. "The platoon roll contains all the information — what kind of people we are and wh[illegible]

So I told [illegible] Poles and [illegible] attentively, [illegible] its troops again. I said the Entente governments would certainly like to bring in their troops but that the people and the soldiers in the Entente countries did not want to fight against us.

A few days later I led my platoon into battle mopping up the remnants of the bands along the Black Sea coast. The bandits were killed or captured, while our platoon had no casualties. That was important: no one mentioned my red breeches after that.

Soon I was appointed commander of 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment. The regimental commander was Nikolai Dronov, a man who was brave beyond compare, clever and kind. We men were fond of him and fought well under his command.

At the end of December 1920, our brigade was transferred to Voronezh Province to put down a kulak rebellion and to eliminate Kolesnikov's bandits. They were soon wiped out. A small number escaped to Tambov province to join Antonov's kulak-S.R. bands.

A few words about the ringleader of the kulak-S.R. uprising. Antonov came from a lower middle-class family in the town of Kirsanov, Tambov province. He had gone to a non-classical

secondary school but was expelled for bad behaviour and hooliganism. He left Kirsanov, joined a gang of criminals and engaged in robberies that often involved murder. In 1906, Antonov joined the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. For criminal offenses he was later sentenced to a hard labour camp in Siberia. Antonov reappeared in Tambov province in 1917 at the time of the February revolution,[1] soon after, he got the post of chief of the district militia in Kirsanov. He had his people in important places. His closest associates were well-known S.R.s — Bazhenov, Makhnevich, Zoyev, and Loshchinin.

By August 1920, Antonov had built up a sizable force. As soon as his band seized a village or town, they knocked together a new detachment. Detachments were then organized into regiments of up to 1,000 men. Antonov's chief striking force were cavalry regiments, with a total strength of from 1,500 to 3,000 men.

In late 1920, Antonov's bands formed an "army". Its chief operational staff consisted of veteran S.R.s: Boguslavsky, Gusarov, Tokmakov and Mitrofanovich. Tokmakov was elected commander, and Antonov — chief of staff. A second Antonov "army" was soon formed. All military authority was in Antonov's hands. The units were armed with sabres, revolvers, rifles and machine-guns.

The political organization of the kulak-S.R. uprising was handled by the S.R. Central Committee, whose main objective was to overthrow the Soviet government.

The immediate objectives of the Antonovites were:

to disrupt the requisitioning of grain and other levies imposed by the Soviet government;

to kill representatives of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and of the Soviet Government;

to attack small Red Army units with the aim of disarming them;

to demolish railways, munition dumps and depots.

Antonov's bands used the following tactics:

a) avoid engagements with large Red Army units;

[1] February Revolution — the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Russia of February 23-27, 1917; resulted in the overthrow of tsarism. It was an important milestone on the road to the Socialist Revolution of October 25 (November 7 New Style) 1917 — *Ed.*

b) accept battle only when sure of victory and with superiority in manpower;

c) if necessary, withdraw from combat and disperse in smal groups with subsequent reunion at an agreed place.

In December 1920, the Soviet Government established ar army headquarters in Tambov province for wiping out banditism. By March 1, 1921, the Tambov forces numbered 32,500 bayonets, 7,948 sabres, 463 machine-guns, and 63 artillery pieces. By May 1, the forces were reinforced with another 5,000 bayonets and 2,000 sabres. However, because of inadequate organization and lack of initiative the Tambov command failed to eliminate Antonov's bands.

The bands grew bold and raided Red Army garrisons. Early in April 1921, a 5,000-strong Antonov force routed the garrison at Rasskazovo, capturing a whole battalion.

Soon, M. N. Tukhachevsky was put in command of the forces that were to wipe out Antonov's bands.

We had heard a lot about Tukhachevsky and especially about his operational and strategic skills. The men were pleased to have such a gifted commander.

I first saw Tukhachevsky at Zherdevka railway station, Tambov province, when he arrived at the headquarters of our 14th Detached Cavalry Brigade. I happened to be present during his talk with the brigade commander. You could tell from his remarks that his knowledge and experience in conducting large-scale operations were extensive.

After discussing the brigade's plan of action, Tukhachevsky chatted with the commanders and soldiers. He was interested in knowing where they had fought, in what frame of mind the troops and the population were, and what kind of useful work we were doing among the civilians.

He said before leaving:

"Lenin considers it vital that the kulak revolts and their armed bands should be eliminated as quickly as possible. You have been given an important assignment. Spare no effort in carrying it out as soon and as best you can."

Little did I know that in a few years I would meet Tukhachevsky at the People's Commissariat for Defence during discussions of the theoretical foundations of the Soviet Army's tactical skills...

With M. N. Tukhachevsky and V. A. Antonov-Ovseyenko at the head, operations against the bands followed a well-thought-out-plan. I. P. Uborevich, who was Tukhachevsky's deputy, also commanded a composite cavalry group and displayed great bravery and courage in battles against the Antonovites.

The battles against the Antonov bands were particularly intensive at the end of May 1921 in the area of the Vorona River, at the villages of Semyonovka, Nikolskoye, Pushchino, Nikolskoye-Perevoz, Trivki, Klyuchki, Yekaterinovka, and on the Khoper River. G. I. Kotovsky's Cavalry Brigade, the 7th Cavalry Courses from Borisoglebsk and our 14th Cavalry Brigade operated successfully in that region. However, we did not manage then to wipe out Antonov's band.

The Antonovites suffered their major defeat in the area of Serdobsk-Bakury-Yelan, where the operation was headed by I. P. Uborevich. What was left of the band scattered in the general direction of Penza. The bandits were almost completely wiped out in Saratov province with the help of the peasants who hated them.

During the summer of 1921 Uborevich's units, with considerable cooperation from the population, wiped out the bands of Vaska Karas and Boguslavsky near Novokhopersk.

There were many fierce engagements with the Antonovites. One that took place in the spring of 1921 near the village of Vyazovaya Pochta, not far from the Zherdevka railway station, has stuck in my memory. Early in the morning our regiment, which was part of a brigade, was alerted. Scouts had reported a concentration of up to 3,000 of Antonov's horsemen some 10 or 15 km from the village. Our 1st Cavalry Regiment proceeded from Vyazovaya Pochta in the left column, while the 2nd Regiment advanced four or five kilometres to the right. My squadron with four machine-guns and one artillery piece was ordered to move along the highway in the van.

We had covered some five kilometres when the squadron came upon an Antonov detachment of about 250 sabres. We deployed fast, turned the gun around, and, despite the enemy's numerical superiority, launched an attack. Our swift blow broke the Antonovites and they retreated with considerable losses.

In a hand-to-hand fight an Antonovite fired his sawed-off rifle at me and killed my horse. We fell, the horse pinning me

down, and the next moment I would have been slashed to death but for Nochevka, the political instructor, who came to my rescue. With a swing of his sabre he killed the bandit, caught the reins of his horse, and helped me into the saddle.

Soon we noticed a column of enemy cavalry trying to outflank us. We immediately concentrated our fire on this column, and sent a messenger to report the situation to the regimental commander. In 20 or 30 minutes our regiment drew up and engaged the enemy.

The 2nd Regiment had run into superior enemy forces and had to retreat. Taking advantage of the situation, an enemy unit attacked our flank. The regimental commander decided to withdraw to Vyazovaya Pochta and in this way lure the enemy into unfavourable terrain. My squadron was to cover the regiment during disengagement.

Detecting the manoeuvre, the enemy charged my squadron, which then acted as the rearguard for the regiment.

The engagement was extremely fierce. The bandits were aware that we were greatly outnumbered and felt certain they would crush us. But that was easier said than done. What saved us was that the squadron had four machine-guns with plenty of ammunition and a 76-mm field gun.

By moving these weapons from place to place we fired at the attackers almost point-blank. Moving slowly backwards, we saw the battlefield become covered with dead enemy soldiers and horses. But we, too, were suffering heavy losses. I saw my good friend, platoon commander Ukhach-Ogorovich fall out of the saddle, badly wounded. He was a competent commander and well brought up. His father, a colonel in the old Russian army, who sided with the Soviets from the very first, was a leading instructor at our Ryazan commanders' courses. Before he lost consciousness, Ukhach-Ogorovich whispered:

"Write my mother. Don't leave me to the bandits."

We put our wounded beside the dead on the gun carriage and machine-gun sleds and took them with us, so the bandits would not mutilate them.

The counter-attack planned by the regiment did not materialize — the thin ice on the river we were to cross gave way and we had to continue our retreat as far as Vyazovaya Pochta.

We were already in the village when I rushed to a group of

bandits who were trying to get our machine-gun. For the second time that day the horse under me was killed. Revolver in hand, I fought the bandits who were trying to capture me alive. Political instructor Nochevka again came to my rescue, assisted by soldiers Bryksin, Gorshkov and Kovalev.

Casualties in my squadron that day were 10 men killed and 15 wounded. Three of the wounded died the next day; Ukhach-Ogorovich, my friend and mate, was one of them.

That had been a hard day for us. We grieved over the loss of our comrades. The only thing that took the edge off our pain was the knowledge that we had eliminated such a large bandit force.

For this most of the commanders and political officers, and many of the soldiers, were decorated. I was among them. Here is what is said in the order of the top command of August 31, 1921:

"Decorated with the Order of the Red Banner is the commander of 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, Detached Cavalry Brigade, for having held off an onslaught of the enemy numbering from 1,500 to 2,000 sabres for seven hours with his squadron in a battle at the village of Vyazovaya Pochta, Tambov province, on March 5, 1921, and then, counter-attacking, smashed the bandits after six hand-to-hand clashes."

The end of summer 1921 saw the final mopping up of the small bands scattered about Tambov province. They had to be wiped out completely as soon as possible. My squadron was set the task of eliminating Zverev's band of about 150 men. The band was soon detected. We took off in pursuit. Gradually, the band was losing strength. Near the edge of a forest we managed to catch up with it, and attacked.

The fighting was over within an hour, but in the gathering dusk Zverev and four of his men escaped into the forest. Nothing could help them, however: the Antonov bands in Tambov province existed no longer.

I recall a curious incident that occurred on that occasion. As we pursued the band, we suddenly came upon two armoured cars that came rolling from a near-by village. Since we knew the band had no armoured cars, we did not fire on them. The armoured cars, however, took up an advantageous position and trained their machine-guns on us. Why on earth? We sent

messengers. It turned out they were our armoured cars with Uborevich himself in the leading one. On learning of the band's retreat in the direction of the forest he had decided to intercept it. Good thing we cleared up matters, or the consequences might have been disastrous.

That is how I first met Uborevich. We saw much of each other later, between 1932 and 1937. He was then in command of the Byelorussian Military District, where I was a cavalry division commander.

* * *

...Years passed. The hardships of the Civil War were forgotten. But we will never forget that each of us was motivated by the firm belief in the justice of the ideas proclaimed by Lenin's Party in October 1917.

British General Knox wrote to his government at that time that it was possible to crush a million-strong Bolshevik army, but when 150 million Russians did not want the whites, and wanted the Reds, it was futile helping the former.

For a number of reasons the Red Army could not make full use of the [illegible] [illegible] and arm it with new views on the essence and methods of struggle.

"No revolution is worth anything unless it can defend itself," said Lenin.[1] And it was the Party, its Central Committee and Lenin himself who, in the years of the Civil War, played a decisive role in organizing the country's defence, uniting the efforts at the front and in the rear and raising the masses of workers, peasants and Red Army men to fight the interventionists and the counter-revolution. Hundreds and thousands of measures were taken that secured victory over the enemy.

Historians have ascertained that between December 1, 1918 and February 27, 1920, the Council of Workers' and Peasants' Defence had held 101 meetings at which 2,300 questions were discussed concerning the organization of the country's defence.

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[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, 1974, p. 124.

the supply of the Red Army and Navy with materiel, armaments, other equipment, and victuals. All the meetings but two were presided over by Lenin.

Documents dating back to the Civil War show that directives and decisions of the Party's Central Committee and its Political Bureau, as well as Lenin's instructions, formed the basis of the concrete plans of military operations worked out by the Red Army High Command and the Revolutionary Military Councils of the various Fronts. The strategic plans of all major campaigns were thoroughly discussed at plenary and routine meetings of the Party Central Committee.

Lenin had close contacts with the High Command, the fronts and armies, and intimately knew many commanders and political workers. He constantly corresponded with them. Lenin signed at least 600 letters and telegrams on matters concerned with the defence of the Soviet state during the Civil War.

At the same time, neither Lenin nor the Party Central Committee duplicated the functions of the High Command or the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic in operational control of the fronts and armies or of combat actions.

On learning that some military leaders had doubts about the plan for fighting Denikin (that plan was worked out by Commander-in-Chief S.S. Kamenev), Lenin, on behalf of the Political Bureau, wrote to Trotsky: "The Politbureau fully recognises the operational authority of the Commander-in-Chief and asks you to make this clear to all top-level executives."[1]

When S.S. Kamenev asked Lenin to show all draft directives of the government on operational matters to the High Command, Lenin made the following note on the letter to that effect sent by S.S. Kamenev to all members of the Party's Political Bureau: "I think the request should be granted and a decision taken that either the Commander-in-Chief should be called in personally, or the draft directives sent to him for his *urgent* opinion."[2]

By and large, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic and Military Councils of the Fronts and armies did their work in compliance with decisions of the Communist

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[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 44, 1977, p. 270.
[2] Ibid., pp. 300-01.

Party's Central Committee. Central Committee instructions were followed in building up the Republic's defences and in appointing commanders and commissars to responsible posts. The decision of the CC RCP(B) "On the Policy of the War Department" adopted late in 1918 on Lenin's initiative pointed out that the Party was responsible for the policy of the military department and extended its influence to all military matters and to combat operations of the Soviet Armed Forces.

Communists were the cementing force in the Red Army. The Party's Central Committee had repeatedly carried out mobilizations of Party members, sending them to key sectors of the front. In October 1918, there were 35,000 Communists in the army. A year later, their number was already about 120,000, and in August 1920 [illegible]

[illegible] be a decisive factor in the Civil War was due to the militant, patriotic activities of army Communists, commissars, political departments and Party cells.

Speaking of the role played at that time by the army's Party-political apparatus, M. V. Frunze wrote: "Who was it that introduced elements of order and discipline in the ranks of our young Red regiments formed to the thunder of gun shots? Who was it that in evil hours of failure and defeat encouraged the men, bringing new energy into their shaken ranks? Who was it that organized the army's rear, establishing Soviet power and Soviet order there, creating conditions for the rapid and successful advance of our armies? Who was it that worked persistently and tenaciously to demoralize the enemy army and to undermine its rear, thus paving the way for successes to come?

"All this was done by the political bodies of the army, and I must say they managed brilliantly. The services they performed in the past are beyond all praise."

I readily subscribe to this a thousand times, and certify to its truth.

During the Civil War the Party and the people had not only crushed the enemy; they had also laid the foundation of a mass army recruited by general conscription of the working people. Central and local military administrations were established, the first regulations and manuals worked out, and a uniform struc-

ture for units and formations introduced. By the end of 1920, our army numbered 5,500,000 men, though it had suffered tremendous losses from September 1918 to December 1920: 800,000 were killed, wounded or missing, and nearly 1,400,000 died of serious diseases caused by malnutrition and lack of clothes, footwear, medicines and medical services.

Theoretical conclusions from the vast military experience accumulated during the Civil War were used as guidelines for building up the Soviet Armed Forces for many years. I would like to say a few words about the following:

First, the unity of the army and the people. The Civil War showed forcefully the unity of the front and the rear and in particular the military advantages of a country which had become a military camp. Objectively, this unity was based on the Soviet social and state systems and on the worker-peasant alliance, and subjectively — on the identity of purpose of the army and the people. As a result a force appeared that increased the might of the weapons many times over. For the first time in world history an army was created which knew what it was fighting for; the workers and peasants, who were making incredible sacrifices, realized that they were defending the Soviet Socialist Republic, the rule of the working people. This Lenin identified as the source of this force.

Second, the leading role of the Party in dealing with military problems and the influence it exercised on the army through the Party-political apparatus.

From the military point of view, the leading role of the Communist Party is of paramount importance also because it is a ruling party in a country where the means of production are publicly owned. This makes for an unprecedented concentration of economic resources for solving major military problems. A unique opportunity is thus created for manoeuvring the huge material and manpower resources, following an integrated military policy, and making military directives obligatory for all.

Party-political work, for its part, directs all conscientious forces in the army and navy faithful to the revolutionary cause towards a common goal, this multiplies their efficiency and is a source of mass heroism.

"It was only because of the Party's vigilance and its strict discipline," said Lenin, "because the authority of the Party

united all government departments and institutions, because the slogans issued by the Central Committee were adopted by tens, hundreds, thousands and finally millions of people as one man, because incredible sacrifices were made — it was only because of all this that the miracle which occurred was made possible. It was only because of all this that we were able to win in spite of the campaigns of the imperialists of the Entente and of the whole world having been repeated twice, thrice and even four times."[1]

Third, the principle — the strictest centralization, one-man command and iron discipline — especially so because this principle had more than once been attacked by all kinds of oppositionists.

Lenin pointed out that absence of one-man command in the army "all too often leads to inevitable disaster, chaos, panic, division of authority and defeat."[2]

Attempts to oppose guerrilla forms of army organization (permissible when an army is in the making) to the principles of building up a regular army, i. e. centralized and uniform control at all levels and strict subordination and discipline (which must become prevalent) were consistently combated in many basic documents of Party congresses and Central Committee plenary meetings, as well as in the course of day-to-day Party work.

It goes without saying that one-man command was to be introduced in strict compliance with the concrete historical conditions, taking into account the class composition of the body of [illegible] one-man command.

But gradually Lenin's principle of one-man command came to prevail as a standard and basic principle of command in the Soviet Army, combining with the greater role played by army political bodies and Party organizations. Coupled with strict discipline based on the Red Army men's constant awareness

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[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 446.
[2] Ibid., Vol. 29, p. 438.

and conscientious discharge of their duty to defend their homeland, one-man command became instrumental in strengthening the will of the troops, and improving their knowledge and motivation.

Each period in the history of our country introduced new features to the building of the Soviet Armed Forces, strengthening and preparing them to repulse aggression. The military experience acquired during the Civil War and the basic principles formulated at that time with Lenin's personal participation, notably those I have listed above, were elaborated upon in the 30s and 40s, helping to increase the might of the Soviet Army, which routed fascism in the Great Patriotic War.

Chapter 4

# REGIMENTAL AND BRIGADE COMMANDER

When the Soviet people returned to a peaceful life after their heroic victory in the Civil War, they faced colossal difficulties in rebuilding the dislocated national economy. Almost all branches of the economy lay in ruins. Every effort had to be concentrated on rectifying the critical condition of industry, agriculture and transport. It was necessary to send several million of the demobilized soldiers to do reconstruction work. The cost of maintaining the army had to be cut. At the same time it was imperative to maintain and strengthen the country's defences. "We have already taught a number of powerful countries not to wage war on us, but we cannot guarantee that this will be for long,"[1] Lenin said.

Already in 1920 and 1921, troops which were not participating in military actions were either fully or partially assigned to help the country's rehabilitation. A commission was set up under the Labour and Defence Council headed by Kalinin and Dzerzhinsky to direct the labour armies in augmenting fuel and raw materials supplies, and to raise agricultural output.

By the end of 1924, the strength of the armed forces was reduced from 5,5 million to 562,000.

Demobilization was certainly in the interests of millions of soldiers who longed for their ploughs and machine tools and missed their families and homes. It was hard to keep the soldiers in the army, especially so since most of them were peasants. This process could "wash away" the core of the army. In February 1921, demobilization of Communists was stopped by a decision of the Organizing Bureau of the Russian Communist

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, 1982, p. 494.

arty's Central Committee. Some time earlier, the Party's Cen-
al Committee addressed all Party organizations in a circular
etter, "On the Red Army", warning against any slackening of
he concern for the Red Army. In general, however, most of the
nen who stayed in the ranks did so because, by virtue of
heir inclination and ability, they had chosen to devote them-
selves to military service.

It was imperative, in the conditions of peaceful construction, to work out a single military doctrine, to consolidate the regular Red Army, to settle new complex organizational questions, to organize the training of military and political cadres. Special attention was given to the need for strengthening specialized technical units, such as machine-gun, artillery, armour, aviation, etc., and providing them with everything they needed.

These problems were thoroughly discussed at the 10th, 11th and 12th congresses of the Party where they were a subject of heated arguments. On instructions of the Party Central Committee, M. V. Frunze and S. I. Gusev prepared the theses, "Reorganization of the Red Army", in which they favoured having a regular army, envisaged a gradual transition to militia formations, and advocated the development of Soviet military science. Others were in favour of immediately introducing the militia principle in staffing the army. The 10th Congress of the Party adopted the Leninist principle of military construction in time of peace. The Congress resolution said explicitly: "The agitation of *certain comrades* for dissolving the present Red Army and going over at once to a militia is wrong and, in effect, dangerous at the moment."

Despite all the efforts of the Party to strengthen the army, it was felt that more radical steps were needed, and the sooner the better.

From June 1922 till March 1923 I was squadron commander in the 38th Cavalry Regiment, and then second-in-command of the 40th Cavalry Regiment, 7th Samara Cavalry Division. These regiments had experienced commanders, and I learnt much from them. The command personnel, Party members and the political workers of the regiments made up a close-knit, efficient body.

In those days, most of the Red Army units had no well-appointed barracks, houses for commanders, mess rooms, clubs and

the like essential for the normal life of servicemen. We were scattered, living in villages, quartered in peasant houses; food was cooked in field kitchens, and the horses were kept in private yards. We took this as a matter of course, because our country was going through exceptional difficulties.

The commanding officers were mostly young and robust people, full of energy and persistence. Besides, most of us were single and had only our service to worry about. We worked ecstatically 15 or 16 hours a day. Still, we were short of time to do everything we wanted to do.

One day in the spring of 1923 I was summoned to the divisional commander. I did not know why, and must admit I was a bit worried: had I done something wrong?

The commander, N. D. Kashirin, received me cordially, offered tea, and began asking about combat and tactical training in the regiment. Then he asked:

"Do you think our cavalry is getting proper training for a future war and what do you think a future war will be like?"

The question looked tricky. I blushed and could not answer at once. The commander saw my confusion and waited patiently for me to gather my wits.

"One thing is clear," I began. "We commanders lack the due knowledge and skills to train the troops for modern warfare. We still train our men the way we were trained in the tsarist army. To give the men the proper training, we must first equip commanders with a modern approach to military science."

"That's right," the commander agreed. "We are trying to put all our commanders through military-political courses and academies, but it's a long process and we don't have enough educational facilities yet. You will have to study by yourself for a while."

He paced the room and suddenly announced that it had been decided to appoint me commander of the 39th Buzuluk Cavalry Regiment.

"I don't know you very well, but the comrades I spoke to recommend you for the post. If you have no objections, go to headquarters and get your orders. The assignment has already been signed."

I was thrilled. My new position was quite an honour and

very responsible. To command a regiment was always considered a most important stage in mastering the military art.

The regiment is the basic combat unit where the cooperation of all ground arms, and sometimes not only ground arms, is organized for combat. A regimental commander must know his own units well, and also the support units normally assigned to the regiment in combat. He must properly choose the main direction in battle and concentrate his main forces accordingly. This is particularly important when fighting a superior enemy force.

A commander who has mastered the system of controlling a regiment and can keep it in constant combat readiness, will always be an advanced military leader at all other levels of command, both in peacetime and in war.

By the end of the Civil War the army had over 200 schools and courses training cadres for all arms of the service. In 1920 commander courses had trained 26,000 Red Army commanders. A broad network of courses, schools and academies was being established, a single system of training and educating proletarian commanders and political workers was emerging. Junior commanders were initially trained at regimental schools for 7-10 months; medium-rank commanders were educated at regular military and naval schools, while senior commanding officers attended military academies. National military schools were opened in Union Republics. Later on, refresher courses for commanding personnel played an important role. I attended such courses, of which I will speak below.

In my opinion, training and self-education in camp conditions was of no less importance for shaping skilled commanders, especially the junior and middle echelons. Hundreds of thousands of servicemen added to their knowledge in this way, perfected their skills and immediately tested them during exercises, manoeuvres and marches. Those unable for some reason to join a military school engaged in self-education in their own units.

Of course, after the successful completion of the Civil War there were commanders who thought they had nothing more to learn. Some of them saw their error in time and changed

their behaviour accordingly. Others, who preferred to remain with the old stock of knowledge, were soon unable to cope with the new demands and were forced to retire.

In late May 1923, when I was put in command of the 39th Regiment, it was preparing to go to camp for cavalry training for the first time since the Civil War. Many commanders had no clear idea of how to go about their work in the new conditions.

On assuming command, I found that combat readiness was inadequate. Firing and tactical training were particularly poor. I therefore ordered the units to concentrate on the organization of facilities for camp training.

In early June the camp was essentially ready. The regiment was quartered in a well-arranged tent camp with a good summer mess-hall and a club. Sheds and tethering posts were put up for the horses. We were particularly proud of our firing range for all types of arms.

We started combat training and political education classes. We worked hard and were pleased that our efforts were yielding good results. Squadron commanders and political instructors worked in a spirit of friendly cooperation and displayed much initiative. The creative energy and initiative of the Communists was in evidence in all undertakings.

I want to make special mention of A. M. Yanin, our commissar. He was a staunch Communist and a fine man who was in rapport with the soldiers, never grudged them a kind word and yet could be demanding. He was respected and loved by everybody. It is truly a pity that this outstanding commissar was killed in action in 1942 on the Caucasian Front. His son, whom he had raised a staunch patriot, was killed in the same battle.

In mid-summer, G. D. Gai, a Civil War hero, took over command of the division.

It gives me pleasure to recollect our cooperation. We first met in his tent in camp where all commanders and commissars were summoned for a conference. After the official introduction, Gai invited everyone present to be seated round his desk. He was a handsome man with a military bearing and a kindly look; his quiet, even voice spoke of composure and confidence. I had heard much of his

heroic deeds, and was looking at him with interest to see what sort of a commander and man he was.

Our talk was long, but when we took leave of him everybody was favourably impressed by this first meeting. As we shook hands on parting, he said he would like to visit my regiment in a couple of days to see equestrian and tactical exercises. I was flattered, but admitted that we still had many shortcomings.

"We'll put them right together," Gai said with a smile, and added: "It's good you want to make a good showing."

Three days later, on orders from divisional HQ, the regiment was lined up for inspection review. Gai, on a black horse with white stockings, mounted a hill to watch the exercises. The horse was restive, but the commander held him in check with an iron hand and strong legs.

At first the orders were given orally, then by waving the sabre (the so-called wordless exercise), and finally by trumpet calls. Manoeuvre patterns, movements, approaches, turns, halts, and alignments were executed more smartly than I had expected. Finally, the regiment was deployed into Cossack charge formation and I directed the centre towards the hill where the divisional commander was watching us. I ordered the regiment to close up towards the centre, and to even ranks. Then I galloped up to the divisional commander to report the end of the exercise. He interrupted me, threw up his hands, and shouted in mock despair:

"I surrender!" Then riding up to me, he said warmly: "Thank you, thank you very much."

He rode along the lined-up regiment, drew near the centre, stood in his stirrups and addressed the men.

"I am an old cavalryman and well familiar with the combat training of the cavalry. Today you proved that you honestly do your duty to your country, and do not spare yourselves. This is as it should be. Proper training and awareness of your duty to the people are a guarantee of the invincibility of our heroic Red Army. Thank you. You have made me happy."

He turned to me, gripped my hand, and said with a smile:

"We'll see the second part of the exercises some other time. Let the regiment rest and you and I will go and see how the camp is organized."

He walked about the camp for more than two hours, looking into every detail. Then he had a long talk with the men, telling them of his Civil War experiences. He took leave only when the bugler sounded the call for dinner.

On seeing the commander off, Commissar Yanin and I discussed what we had to do to prevent excess complacency and self-assurance.

The Commander's commendation inspired the men, which was evidenced by the results. To us commanders his friendly, unassuming manner of treating the men was a splendid example. Later, Gai often visited the regiment to talk with the commanders and men. He was not just a superior. He was a welcome friend, a true Communist.

We finished the camp exercises with good ratings. Towards the end of September the 7th Samara Cavalry Division was dispatched to Orsha for district field games. Such games, like the camp training, were the first since the Civil War.

They were small-scale games, held in passing, so to say, on the way back from the summer camps. Yet our division was assigned a rather difficult task. It was to make a forced march towards Orsha. The divisional commander ordered my regiment to be the advance guard, which meant that we would have to cover a great distance in a short time, provide security on the move, and be constantly ready to deploy and engage the "enemy", thus furnishing the most favourable conditions for the division's main force to go into action.

It took the division thirty hours to make the march. We covered a hundred kilometres and made two five-hour halts on the way. It was a severe test of the horses' endurance. Besides, they had to be fed and watered during halts, and, furthermore, the men had to keep their accoutrements in order. Despite fatigue, all were in high spirits, for it had become known that after the games the 7th Cavalry Division would be quartered in Minsk.

At dawn the scouts whom I had sent forward reported that an "enemy" force was heading for Orsha railway station on the other side of the Moscow-Orsha railway. "Enemy" formations had already engaged the units covering the approaches to the railway station.

As is usual during field exercises, umpires with white arm-

ands rushed to the regiment. Umpires are commanders who elp the top command in conducting the games.

They fired incessant questions: "What information do you have about the enemy? What is your decision?"

I answered that I would immediately ride to the forward detachment for on-the-spot reconnaissance, and would make my decision there. I spurred my horse and in a few minutes galloped up to the vanguard detachment under K. Tyupin, an energetic squadron commander.

He reported that something like two "enemy" infantry regiments were deployed in prebattle formation on the other side of the railway tracks, and were advancing in the general direction of the elevations lying ahead. A "battle" was in progress with our infantry. The "enemy" was apparently unaware that our units were approaching the battle area, for we had not seen either his security detachments or his reconnaissance.

The commander of the vanguard detachment had barely finished his report when a knot of horsemen appeared in the distance heading our way. We recognized Division Commander Gai by his white-stockinged horse: I briefly informed him of the situation and said it was an opportune moment for a surprise attack: I had decided to deploy the regiment for combat and attack the "enemy" flank, since the terrain was favourable.

The Commander looked through his binoculars, and said:

"It's a rare chance but make it snappy. Support the attack with artillery and machine-gun fire. The division's main force will come up in 20 or 30 minutes. It will strike the 'enemy' in the rear to complete the rout."

An hour later the "battlefield" was enveloped in smoke and dust; the cavalry regiments of the 7th Division were swooping down in battle formation on the "enemy" with a loud "hurrah". It was a thrilling sight: flushed faces, glaring eyes, just like a real battle. A bugle call interrupted the attack. The exercises were over. There was no post-exercise critique.

We were told that M. N. Tukhachevsky had watched the battle and spoken highly of our units. He was particularly pleased with the 7th Cavalry Division for the forced march

and the spirited attack. The "enemy" infantry won h praise for quickly deploying to meet the cavalry charge o its flank.

We were pleased that Tukhachevsky had praised us and wer glad that the "enemy's" good manoeuvrability had also been noted.

We rested, and a couple of days later marched to Minsk where our division was to have permanent quarters.

Thousands of townspeople lined the streets. Cheers accompanied us all the way. I believe no other army in the world enjoys the sympathy and love of the people as much as our Soviet Army.

I am still moved when I remember how the veterans of our division, men who had fought in the battles of Tsaritsyn, Kizlyar, Astrakhan, Pugachevsk, and Buzuluk, met us. They had not spared themselves fighting the whiteguards and the counter-revolutionaries for Soviet power. Their friendly, heartfelt words found an immediate response in our hearts. Many of the men of our 7th Division had gone through the hardships of the Civil War, and could well appreciate the reminiscences of the war.

We found that what was to be our barracks was still occupied by the 4th Infantry Division which had not had time to move to its quarters in Slutsk.

We had to take temporary shelter in private houses on the city outskirts. Each room (mostly ill-fitted for habitation) accommodated 3-4 persons. What made matters worse was the heavy autumn rains, which turned the roads into a quagmire. We had to save the horses, build stables, repair barracks and service outhouses and prepare the winter training facilities.

I had to call a meeting of Party members, and later of the entire regiment, to explain the situation.

In those far-off and trying years men were capable of any sacrifice, ready for any hardship for the sake of a happy future for the Soviet people. Of course, we had a few bellyachers, but they were quickly brought to their senses. A sound army collective is a great force, indeed! It builds an atmosphere of true friendship — an earnest of the unit's enthusiasm and combat efficiency.

In late November when snow fell, we managed to move to barracks, and put the horses in stables. We still had much work to do to provide all the required facilities, of course, but we were through with the hardest part of the job.

Our next task was to properly organize combat and political training in the new environment.

Today it looks quite simple, but at that time, commanding a cavalry regiment at only 26, I had so little experience! In the old tsarist army I had finished a course for NCOs, later in the Red Army I had gone through a nine-months' course for cavalry commanders. And that was all. True, after the Civil War I pored over manuals, regulations, all sorts of books on the military art, and particularly on tactics.

My theoretical knowledge lagged behind my practical experience, gained during World War I. I was well up in combat training methods and had a liking for them. But I also knew that in theory I was still behind in what a regimental commander should know. So, upon giving it some thought, I arrived at the conclusion that there was no time to waste and that I had to study hard. But my routine work in the regiment kept me busy twelve hours a day. The only way out was to add another 3-4 hours for self-education. I would make up for the lost sleep later, after I had accumulated some knowledge.

Most of the commanding officers who had risen from the ranks during the Civil War, and also former warrant-officers, held the same view.

Though the core of the army had grown much stronger by that time, the fluidity of the personnel continued, the supplies were far from adequate, and mobilization readiness of the troops was insufficient. There were major faults in the work of the war department then headed by Trotsky.

In January 1924, a plenary meeting of the Russian Communist Party's Central Committee decided to check the activity of the war department, and a military commission of the Central Committee was set up, headed by V. V. Kuibyshev and later by S. I. Gusev. Material on the situation in the army was prepared for the plenary meeting by M. V. Frunze, K. Ye. Voroshilov, A. S. Bubnov, G. K. Orjonikidze, A. A. Andreyev, I. S. Unshlikht, N. M. Shvernik, and others. The general

conclusions drawn from the analysis of the facts collect were discouraging and strongly worded.

It became clear that a radical military reform was neede to strengthen the country's armed forces. The commission proposals, approved by the Party's Central Committee, forme the basis for such a reform.

One of the key measures was to introduce the territoria principle of staffing the Red Army, combining it with the cadre principle.

The territorial principle applied to infantry and cavalry divisions. Its purpose was to provide necessary military training for the maximum of working people with the minimum distraction from production. Sixteen to 20 per cent of the personnel of these divisions were cadre commanders, political workers and soldiers, the rest being called up in the course of five years for three months' training in the first year and then for one month each year. The rest of the time the men were employed in industry and agriculture.

This system made for quick deployment in case of need of sufficiently trained combat personnel to back up the cadre. The cost of training one soldier in a territorial unit in the course of five years was much lower than in a cadre unit for two years. Of course, it would have been better to have a purely cadre army, but this was not feasible at that time.

Some aspects of the military reform were entrenched in the Law on Military Service passed in September 1925 by the USSR Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. That was the first all-Union law on compulsory military service by all citizens of our country, which also defined the organizational structure of the armed forces.

The central and local military administrative bodies were reorganized. The new General Staff of the Red Army led by M. V. Frunze (deputies M. N. Tukhachevsky and B. M. Shaposhnikov) was the main organizing centre of the Red Army. Control was made simpler, and efficiency and responsibility were enhanced. The Party strengthened from above the new organizational system of the armed forces. In January 1925, Mikhail Vasilyevich Frunze, an outstanding Communist and military leader, was appointed People's Commissar for the

Army and Navy and Chairman of the USSR Revolutionary Military Council.

Once our regiment was visited by V. K. Blücher, the legendary Civil War hero. Before the Revolution he had been a worker at the Mytishchi car building plant, then served as an NCO in the tsar's army. Blücher was member of the Bolshevik Party from 1916. I had heard much about him, but that was our first meeting. It was a great event for all commanders and men of the regiment. He was invited by Division Commander G. D. Gai to see how military training and education were conducted in our regiment. A great honour for the regiment.

First thing Blücher went to the kitchen to see how the personnel were fed, and was satisfied with what he saw. He warmly shook hands with the cooks on parting. One should have seen their faces! He then went through all the barracks and the club. In conclusion, he asked:

"Well, what about combat readiness? You are stationed close to the border, you know."

I answered that the regiment was well aware of its mission and was always ready to do its duty.

"That is all very well. Now, order the alarm signal." Frankly, I had not expected this. Still, I recovered immediately and ordered the officer on duty to alert the regiment.

An hour later the regiment was lined up and ready for action. Blücher checked the pack-loads, arms and weapons, the equipment, and combat readiness in general. He was particularly exacting when inspecting the machine-gun squadron and severely reprimanded one crew that had failed to pour water into the cooler of its machine-gun and had no supply of it at all.

"Do you know the price of such negligence in wartime?" Blücher asked.

The soldiers could find nothing to say. "Let this be a lesson to you, comrades."

Then Blücher proposed a simulated tactical situation: the "enemy" is approaching a very important tactical objective in an attempt to seize it. The "enemy" is 12 kilometres from the objective. The regiment and the "enemy" are about 25 kilometres apart, i. e., the objective is midway between them.

To waste time on briefing the commanders was counter-

productive: the "enemy" would then reach the objective before us. I made the following decision: the 1st Squadron with four heavy machine-guns and one artillery piece, acting as the vanguard detachment, was ordered to follow me at a fast trot. The mission would be assigned on the move. The main force under my deputy was to follow three kilometres behind the vanguard, ready for a meeting engagement.

The vanguard detachment, continually changing its pace, sometimes moving at a gallop, reached the objective just in time to secure a tactically favourable line and meet the "enemy" with fire.

After the "retreat" call, Blücher addressed the regiment: "Thank you, comrades, for your honest service. What your regiment showed me today is all deserving of praise. I call on you to treasure and augment the fighting traditions of the glorious Samara Cavalry Division which heroically fought the whiteguards and the interventionists. Always be ready to fulfil the combat orders of our great Motherland!"

The men responded with a loud "hurrah". Blücher's words had obviously moved everybody.

I was charmed by his sincerity. Fearless fighter against the enemies of the young Soviet Republic, a popular hero, Blücher was an ideal to many. I admit that I, too, had always wanted to resemble that unflinching Bolshevik, steadfast comrade and gifted commander.

Division Commander Gai summoned me in late July 1924, and asked what I was doing to increase my knowledge. I said I was doing a lot of reading and was analyzing world war operations. I thoroughly prepared for the classes I conducted with the commanding personnel of the regiment.

"This is all well and good," Gai said, "but it is not enough today. Military science does not stand still. Our commanders are in need of a more systematic study of military problems. In autumn, I think, you should go to the Higher Cavalry School in Leningrad. That will serve you in good stead in the future."

I thanked him and said I would do everything to live up to expectations.

Back in the regiment I immediately set to work, pored over text-books, manuals and regulations, preparing for the entrance examinations. The exams were easy, a mere formality, and

entered the first group, together with K. K. Rokossovsky, I. Savelyev, I. Kh. Bagramyan, A. I. Yeremenko, and many other regimental commanders.

I was in Leningrad for the first time, as were most of the other trainees. We took great interest in seeing the sights of the city and visited the scenes of the fighting in October 1917. Little did I know then that 17 years later I would be Commander of the Leningrad Front defending the city of Lenin against Nazi armies.

The Higher Cavalry School was under V. M. Primakov, legendary commander of the celebrated 8th Cavalry Division of Red Cossacks which had struck terror into the hearts of the whiteguards during the Civil War. Primakov, a sturdy man of average height with fine hair, clever eyes and a pleasant face, at once won our favour. He was well educated, and expressed himself in a precise and clear manner.

Some time later, Primakov was transferred to the post of a Cossack corps commander in the Ukraine. Batorsky, a well-known cavalry theoretician, was appointed in his stead. We all were glad Primakov had been promoted and believed he would make an outstanding military leader.

Soon the Higher Cavalry School was converted into the Advanced Training Course for Cavalry Commanders, and the training was cut from two years to one.

The curriculum was packed. Besides classes, we had to do much studying at home. Today, as I look back, I sometimes wonder at our endurance and our fanatical persistence in mastering military knowledge.

Once I was told to read a paper before the Military Scientific Society on the main factors influencing the theory of military art. Today this topic would hold no difficulty but at that time I had no idea of how to approach it, how to start and where to finish. The advice my Party comrades gave me helped me out. The paper was even published in a bulletin put out for the trainees.

I still remember the friendly relationship and cooperation in socio-political work between our Party organization and that of Leningrad. Veteran workers from the factories who had seen Lenin and who had stormed the Winter Palace, were frequent guests. They told us about the great October days. We also

visited plants and told the workers about our Civil War experiences. Many of us were former workers; naturally we understood each other perfectly and were good friends.

We often had equestrian contests, and Leningraders would come in large numbers to watch them. Vaulting, concours-hippique, handling sabres and lances, and races and steeple-chases in summer were particularly popular. K. K. Rokossovsky, M. I. Savelyev, I. Kh. Bagramyan and I were unfailingly among the contestants.

In autumn and winter we concentrated on theoretical studies and political education. We did much work in class with sand tables and maps. We worked a lot with the horses riding to improve our horsemanship, which commanders of those days had had to be good at. Fencing was optional but we gave it much of our spare time.

In the summer of 1925 we were mostly engaged in tactical combat training in the field under the immediate command of Batorsky, the chief of the course. He passed on much knowledge and experience to us.

To complete the course we were to make a forced march to the Volkhov River. There we exercised in swimming the river with a horse in conditions of a forced crossing.

It is a pretty tough job to swim a river with a horse. It was not enough to be able to swim in uniform; one had also to control a swimming horse. Much attention was given to this exercise.

I recall a funny incident on the Volkhov River. After the exercises were over, Misha Savelyev from our section who wanted to demonstrate his skill, said he would cross the Volkhov standing on the saddle, to keep his uniform dry.

The commander agreed but ordered a couple of boats to be kept ready just in case. Misha slung the stirrups across the saddle and boldly rode the horse into the river. It walked out to the deep water and swam. Misha stood firmly on the saddle holding the reins. All went well at first. Then, in the middle of the river, the horse apparently got tired and began to thrash about. Try as he might, Misha lost his balance and tumbled into the water. The boats came in useful. The horse reached the bank, and Savelyev, soaked through, was brought ashore in a boat soon afterwards. We laughed and joked, but not Savelyev.

had failed and had also lost his boots in the river. They had en slung round his neck. He rode back to barracks in his socks.

Having finished the courses, Savelyev, commander of the !nd Cavalry Regiment, Rybalkin, commander of a squadron : the 37th Astrakhan Regiment, and I, decided to return to ur station in Minsk on horseback and not by train. It meant overing 963 kilometres of country roads. We were to go rough Vitebsk, Orsha, and Borisov.

We submitted our plan to the command of the courses, and vere granted permission. Unfortunately, no check points, ser-vicing and food supplies could be provided en route. Yet we lid not give up the idea, though fully aware of the difficulties ahead, the more so since a cold and rainy autumn was setting in. We decided to cover the 963 kilometres in seven days. There had never been a cross-country run on horseback of this kind before, either in the Soviet Union or abroad. If our luck did not run out, we expected to set a world record in a group run on horseback.

Our chief aim was to see if we had received enough training to make a long-distance run within a limited time.

Early one morning in the autumn of 1925, our friends and some of the course chiefs came to the Moscow Gate on the outskirts of Leningrad to bid us farewell.

We decided to continually change pace — trotting and walking, and sometimes going at a gallop. The first day we rode 10 kilometres less than planned, because we saw that the horses grew tired, and what was worse, my horse went lame. Dira was a thoroughbred 12 years old which is a considerable age for a horse.

We, too, were tired and badly wanted to rest. The villagers welcomed us heartily, fed the horses and treated us to a square meal.

The next morning my mare was still lame. I stopped up the hole in her hoof with wax, bandaged the hoof and decided to lead the horse for a while. Fortunately, soon she stopped limping. I mounted. No, she did not limp. I broke into a trot — all went well. To take the weight off the horse's injured right leg, I decided to continue the run either walking or galloping with the left leg forward.

My comrades had an easier time, riding sound horses, since

I had to dismount frequently, lead the horse by the bridle, and was naturally under a greater physical strain. But during halts my friends made it their task to find feed and tend the horses.

On the seventh day, when we had passed Borisov and were approachir

streamers.

people who

galloped up

commander

ful completion of the run. The spectators cheered.

Two days later, we had a test two-kilometre obstacle race, inspection and weighing. The results were good, and our run was given high marks. In seven days the horses had lost 8 to 12 kilograms and the riders, 5 to 6 kilograms.

We received government prizes and a commendation from the command and were granted short leaves. I went to my village to see my mother and sister.

I found that during my absence my mother had aged greatly, but still wo

looked old.

had evidently gone hard with them.

My little nephews and I soon became friends; they loved to rummage about in my suitcase, extracting from it whatever they liked.

The village was impoverished; the peasants were poorly dressed and the cattle population had fallen sharply. Many families, indeed, had lost all their livestock during the crop failure of 1921. But to my surprise, practically no one complained. The people understood the reasons for the postwar hardships.

The kulaks and shopkeepers kept to themselves. Probably, they still hoped that the good old days would return, especially after the New Economic Policy was introduced. Taverns and private shops reopened in Ugodsky Zavod, the district centre, and the budding consumer cooperatives tried to compete with them.

On my return to the division I learned that new tables of organization were being introduced under which it would consist of four cavalry regiments instead of six. The 39th Buzuluk Cavalry Regiment which I commanded was merged with th

h Regiment, while the 41st and 42nd regiments formed a w regiment — the 39th Melekess-Pugachevsk Cavalry Regi-nt.

For me and for Savelyev, commander of the 42nd Regiment, this was a matter of personal concern, because one of s was to take command of the new 39th Regiment, while the ther would be transferred to another formation. Understandbly, each of us wanted to stay with the division which had ecome home to us.

The division command chose me, and Savelyev was given another appointment. I showed understanding for his disappointment; our parting was cordial and we met later as good friends.

Formerly, the regiments had consisted of four squadrons; the new ones, in accordance with the military reform, had six squadrons, each two forming a cavalry battalion. In addition, the regiment had a 16-piece machine-gun squadron, a regimental battery, a signals platoon, an engineers platoon and a chemical platoon, and a regimental school for non-commissioned officers.

This meant that busy times had come for the regiment, and also for me. An important aspect of the military reform was the introduction of one-man command in the Soviet Armed Forces. This was carried into effect in two ways. If the commander was a Communist, he usually assumed the commissar's duties as well, and was thus responsible for the combat training, the administrative and quartermaster activity, and the entire Party-political work. The commander had a deputy for political matters. This important step, which tightened discipline and enhanced combat readiness in the army, had become practicable at that time because the commanding personnel had changed much for the better.

If the commander was not a Party member he was responsible only for the combat training and administrative and quartermaster work, while Party-political work was in the hands of a commissar who shared responsibility with the commander for the unit's morale and combat readiness.

One of the orders of the Revolutionary Military Council of that period said: "Always keeping in mind that the task of Soviet power in military building is the establishment of one-man command, the commissar must, on the one hand, draw

the commander with whom he associates into the sphere of communist ideas and, on the other hand, he himself must carefully study military art so as to be able in time to become a commander or take an administrative post."

In the spring of 1925 we received a written directive of the Party Central Committee to all Party organizations entitled "On One-man Command in the Red Army", which pointed out that all the preceding work of the Party and the military bodies to strengthen the Red Army as a whole, and its commanding cadres in particular, had created favourable conditions for implementing the one-man command principle.

Some comrades, though a minority, thought at that time that one-man command would cut back the Party's influence in the army. But it was a Communist who was made the sole commander of a unit. Therefore, the Party's role, far from diminishing, grew stronger. The commander was vested with greater responsibility to the Party for all aspects of army life. Discipline was considerably tightened and the combat readiness of our armed forces was substantially enhanced.

Indeed, the relationship between the commander and the commissar or political worker tended to grow more solid and close. Later on, in 1928, the Revolutionary Military Council, acting on directions of the Party Central Committee, issued the Rules on Commissars, Commanders and Assistants on Political Matters, which made the commissar responsible for the Party-political work and the morale of a unit (formation), while relieving him of all control functions.

After attending the Commanders' Course my work seemed easier to me. I felt more sure of myself and more independent in matters of combat training and political education and in controlling the regiment.

Things were going along smoothly in the regiment. In the winter of 1926, I was summoned by A. P. Krokhmal, commissar of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, and S. K. Timoshenko, who had assumed command of the Corps in February.

As I entered the study, I also saw Division Commander K. D. Stepnoi-Spizharny, Division Commissar G. M. Shtern, and Chief of the Political Department L. I. Bocharov.

"We have called you in to propose that in addition to being regimental commander, you also assume the duties of regimental

ommissar and become sole chief of the regiment," said Timoshenko. "The division command and the political department elieve you are ready for this. What would you say?"

I was silent a little longer than expected, and then replied hat I thought I could manage if assisted by the division command and the political department.

A few days later I was appointed the regiment's sole commander. This being the first such experiment in the 7th Cavalry Division, it imposed a special responsibility on me. In organizational and ideological matters I was aided by the Party bureau secretary and my assistant on political questions. They did not hesitate, if necessary, to correct me in a true Party spirit. Inexperienced as I was, I naturally made some mistakes, and my colleagues' suggestions were useful.

To engage in the political education of the personnel, the superiors must know much more than their subordinates. In those years we troop commanders knew more and learned quicker when it came to combat training than when it came to the basics of Marxism-Leninism.

One reason was that each of us was overburdened with administrative work, combat training and military self-education; on the other hand, many of us underestimated the importance of a thorough knowledge of Marxist-Leninist theory and of the Party's organizational work in the army. Political workers were certainly much better qualified than combat commanders.

Soon the division commander was replaced by D. A. Schmidt, transferred from the Ukraine. The new commander was very much unlike his predecessor, in character, experience and style of work. Stepnoi-Spizharny had been fussy and loquacious; Schmidt was highly intelligent, not given to empty talk, but, unfortunately, did not take pains in his work.

In the summer of 1926, the division moved to camp in a picturesque area near Zhdanovichi, some 20 kilometres from Minsk.

Intense combat training went on in camp, with special emphasis on tactical field instruction of the units, commanders, headquarters, and the formation as a whole. I must confess that I preferred tactics to all other subjects and studied it with pleasure.

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The army is an instrument of war: its sole purpose is to fight the country's enemies, and tactical preparedness is an essential element of success in this struggle. An army lacking in tactical training is forced to learn in the course of fighting at the cost of unnecessary losses.

To develop the regiment's tactical skills, demonstration lessons and instruction classes were regularly held. Here the personnel mastered the technique of reconnaissance, organization of combat, and employment of the technical means of warfare.

Manoeuvres mark the culmination point of all tactical training. And beginning with 1925, the Byelorussian Military District held exercises each year after the summer camp period.

The 7th Cavalry Division invariably took part in all these manoeuvres, and I cannot remember a single case when it failed to get good marks for tactical training. To a great extent this was the result of our commanders' attitude to tactical lessons. All regimental commanders of the 7th Division, I may add, knew their tactics fairly well and were eager to improve their knowledge. At that time the commander of the 37th Cavalry Regiment was V. T. Volsky, the man who in November 1942 commanded a mechanized corps on the Stalingrad Front (together with the 51st Army his corps struck in the general direction of Kalach, where it joined up with elements of the South-Western Front). The 38th Cavalry Regiment was under V. A. Gaidukov, who commanded a corps and other formations during the past war. There were also experienced commanders in other units of the division.

Much attention was given to sports and physical training. We veteran soldiers knew better than anybody else that it took tough men to bear the burdens of war. The success of a unit depends on the training of each soldier. In war troops frequently have to make forced marches in any weather, day and night, along roads and cross-country, to deploy for a swift attack on the move, and to pursue the enemy till his final destruction. In the event of an unfavourable outcome, it is important quickly to withdraw from battle and regroup. Unless a unit is in fine physical shape it soon "loses breath", is usually behind time, incurs heavy losses, and may pay a high price for its unpreparedness.

In all equestrian events our 39th Regiment was the principal

contender among the best cavalry units of the Byelorussian Military District. We had knocked together an active group of sportsmen, many of them commanders. I also practised horsemanship regularly.

We were not as good at markmanship, and the sharpshooter teams of the 40th Regiment invariably beat us. In horsemanship, however, we always outpointed the 40th Regiment and, for that matter, the other formations of our corps.

This, it seems, was very annoying for our rivals, and they did all they could to "outride" us at any cost, even by trickery.

In one district equestrian competition, a commander from the 6th Division, intent on demonstrating his skill and the exceptional endurance of his horse, hid another horse of similar colouring in the woods halfway from the start. The trickster rode the first half of the run at top speed, handed over the badly winded steed to his orderly, mounted the hidden horse and finished the race first. He received the first prize amidst the applause of his mates. But his triumph was shortlived, for the trick was soon discovered and the culprit got his due. But this did not stop our opponents from the 6th Cavalry Division — they would try to "box up" the obvious favourite during a race, fix green twigs for their men and dry ones for us during willow-cutting exercises, and so on.

I recall Semyon Budenny's visit to our regiment. I had not met him before, but I knew of his exploits fighting for our country against the whiteguards and interventionists, and was eager to get acquainted with him, the legendary commander of the First Mounted Army.

One morning in the spring of 1927 there was a telephone call from Division Commander Schmidt. "Budenny will probably visit your regiment," he said, "so get ready to meet him."

"At what time and how shall we meet him?"

"I don't know exactly when. He will first go to the 37th Regiment, then to the 38th, and then to yours. How to meet him? That's up to you — you're the commander."

The division commander obviously did not have in mind any special ceremony, and wanted Budenny met in the usual manner prescribed by the regulations.

In the afternoon there was a call from Gaidukov, commander of the 38th Regiment. "Get ready for the guests, they're on their way," he said.

There was no time to lose. I gathered my closest assistants — Frolkov, my deputy for political affairs, Shchelakovsky, secretary of the regimental Party bureau, and Malyshev, regimental quartermaster. He went out to the entrance. Within five minutes two cars drove through the gates. From the first alighted Budenny and Timoshenko. As prescribed by the regulations, I reported and introduced my assistants. Budenny greeted us all.

"What are your orders?" I asked Budenny.

"And what do you suggest?" asked he.

"I would like to show you how our commanders and men live and work."

"Good, but first I want to see how you feed your men."

In the mess room and the kitchen Budenny inquired in detail into the quality of the victuals, their processing and cooking. Then he wrote a commendation to the cooks and the mess officer in the mess record-book. After that he checked the state of combat training, and said: "Now let us see the horses."

I gave the signal to lead out the horses. In ten minutes the squadrons were lined up and the show of horses began. The horses were in good condition and excellently shod.

Budenny thanked the men for the fine upkeep of the horses and left for the 6th Chongar Division.

Our regiment also received A. I. Yegorov, Commander of the Byelorussian Military District. I knew from comrades who had worked with him that Yegorov came from a peasant family and had been a blacksmith's striker. He was a self-taught man, and when called up to the tsarist army had entered an officers' school and was commissioned. He rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the old army. In July 1918, Yegorov joined the Bolshevik Party and remained a faithful and staunch Communist to the end of his life.

During the Civil War Yegorov showed his great talent as a military leader. He was in command of the Southern Front till Denikin's white guard armies were routed and was then placed at the head of the South-Western Front fighting the white Poles.

After the Civil War, Alexei Yegorov, a distinguished military leader decorated with four orders of the Red Banner and awarded presentation weapons, commanded several military districts and in 1931 was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army. In 1935 he was made Marshal of the Soviet Union.

Yegorov came to our regiment unexpectedly. It was in 1927, after a Central Committee plenary meeting of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, which he had attended. When his arrival was reported to me we were doing tactical exercises. The subject was "concealed outflanking of the enemy and cutting into his rear for a swift attack". Yegorov wished to attend.

Everything was going quite smoothly; the unit commanders made bold and rational decisions. Yegorov was in a good mood; he joked a great deal, and everybody felt at ease. After my summing up, Yegorov made a few comments and suggestions. I particularly remember his remark that it was not enough to teach tactics to our commanders and that they should also be instructed in the operational art, because if a war were unleashed by our country's enemies, many of our commanders would need operational knowledge.

After the classes, Yegorov asked:

"In what state is the regiment's mobilization plan?"

"We have been working on it, and we have some questions to which our superiors have so far given no answer."

"Well, let's see the mobilization plan and your questions," Yegorov said.

For about an hour the chief of staff and I reported in detail on the regiment's mobilization schedule and answered Yegorov's questions.

"Not bad, not bad at all," he said. "Now what is not clear to you?"

Our position was complicated by the proximity of the state border. In an emergency we would have to take the field much below strength. Besides, the regiment would have to detail personnel for the formation of second echelons. "Fighting our first engagement with the enemy when we're under strength may affect the personnel's morale," I said.

"You are right," Yegorov said, "but we have no alternative. And we simply must have second echelons. The enemy must not

be underestimated. We must prepare for war seriously and be ready to fight a clever, skillful and strong enemy. If he proves not as strong and as clever as we thought, this will only be to our advantage."

Yegorov was interested in many things: the state of emergency rations, the condition of the soldiers barracks and commanders quarters. We reported that most commanding personnel were quartered in private homes, with, as a rule, one family to a room.

At that time we were donating personal valuables to the country's gold fund to finance the building of new factories and plants. Yegorov was interested in that also. "And what has the regiment commander donated?" he inquired.

"Four silver cigarette cases won in equestrian contests, and my wife's gold ring and earrings," I replied. In fact, everyone was doing the same at that time.

The District commander looked us over and said: "Very good, comrades, this is as it should be."

If I remember rightly, a delegation of British industrial workers visited the division in 1927. It wanted to express its appreciation to us in some way, and gave us a Red Banner. From that day on, the 7th Cavalry Division was known as the English Proletariat Division.

Things livened up noticeably in our division when Schmidt was replaced [illegible] ...treated

[illegible]

[illegible] the unit commanders. I appreciated him for the demanding approach he invariably took, and his constant concern for improving the combat and political training of the troops. Serdich went into all the details of Party activity and was a model military and political leader. Privately, he was a most modest man.

With Danilo Serdich in command, all field exercises and military district manoeuvres were most instructive and invariably brought renown to the 7th Samara Cavalry Division. We all felt that our operational and tactical knowledge was improving largely due to the efforts of our divisional commander. In short, Serdich was a worthy commander and able instructor.

In January 1930, K. K. Rokossovsky was appointed commander of the 7th Samara Cavalry Division. A little later, in May

0, I was appointed commander of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade he 7th Division. I have already said that Rokossovsky and I l attended the Commanders' Course in Leningrad in 1924-25 l knew each other well. He treated me with great tact, while highly valued his military knowledge, extensive experience military training and education. I welcomed his appointment d was sure that Rokossovsky would be a fine commander our veteran division, and I was not mistaken.

I was in command of the 39th Cavalry Regiment for almost even years.

It had been a good school for me. Besides practical experience had received thorough theoretical and tactical training during istrict manoeuvres, corps and division exercises and war games. As a one-man commander I learned the full value of Party guidance in running Red Army units and organizing their daily activity. Of course, all this had not been easy to grasp as one went along, and mistakes had been made. But one makes mistakes in any activity, unless one does exactly as one is told by one's superiors, and shows no initiative. In my view the main thing is not the mistakes as such but how quickly they are seen and rectified.

I was said to have been unnecessarily exacting — but this I considered indispensable for a Bolshevik commander. Looking back I admit that at times I was too exacting, not always sufficiently restrained and tolerant of the faults of my subordinates. I could not bear to see any slackness in servicemen's work or behaviour. Some of them would not understand this, and I, for my part, was probably not tolerant enough of human frailties.

Certainly, I can see that a lot better now. Experience is a source of important lessons. But it is still my firm belief that no one has the right to lead an easy life at the expense of another's work. And that is something military people should particularly appreciate, for they are called upon to be the first to defend their country in the battlefield, unsparing of their lives.

The 2nd Brigade which I was to command consisted of two cavalry regiments, the 39th and 40th. I would have to study the situation in the 40th Regiment then commanded by Ivlev, a former tsarist officer and none too sociable a person.

He had no heart for horsemanship, yet was well versed in fire training to which he devoted much attention. In that respect his regiment was always ahead of the others.

Probably because of my long association with the 39th Regiment whose men had become dear to me, I thought the 39th was better trained and better organized. I realized, however, that the commanders and political instructors of the 40th Regiment, attached as they were to their unit, would resent my setting the 39th as a model to be copied.

Therefore, I sought to note and popularize in other units all that was good in the 40th Regiment, down to the smallest details. We often had demonstrative exercises of the two regiments in tactics, firing and horsemanship, and also in political education. This method soon proved effective. The 2nd Brigade became the leading one in the 7th Samara Division as often noted by the command, which pleased all of us no end.

In short, we all worked with enthusiasm, as one team. The commanders relied on the help of the Party organizations and concentrated the energy of the men on improving their combat readiness. I could cite many examples, but I think tha is unnecessary. I'll just mention what I remember best.

One day the Party secretary of the 39th Regiment suggested that regiments compare notes about their work on the scale of the brigade.

A joint meeting of the regiments' Party bureaus decided to conduct a model political lesson with a group of soldiers to demonstrate how to explain to the politically most backward men the more involved issues of Party policy.

The first lesson was brilliantly conducted by B. A. Zhmurov, political instructor of a squadron of the 39th Regiment.

Then on the initiative of the political instructors of the 40th Regiment the worst disciplined men were gathered to find out in a frank talk the reason for their misdemeanours. It turned out that many offences were committed not so much through the fault of the soldiers but because their commanders and political instructors did not know their character and individual problems, and were often unfair in judging their behaviour. This was detrimental to their own prestige. The men often committed offences merely to annoy these superiors.

These friendly talks were of much benefit both for the men and their commanders.

In late 1929 I was sent to Moscow to attend a refresher course for higher level commanders. We were put up at the Red Army Club hotel, and had our classes at the People's Commissariat for Defence in Frunze Street where there were special classrooms and laboratories. The level of instruction was very high. In our group lessons were conducted by Mikhail Sangursky, deputy to Blücher and a most knowledgeable man. His lectures on various aspects of warcraft were amply backed by examples from World War I and the Civil War. Other instructors were also accomplished experts in tactics and the operational art.

The trainees were all keenly interested in military theory; we hunted for every new book on the subject, and collected everything we could lay our hands on to take back to our units. Soviet military science had already begun to take shape, and the leading place in it rightly belonged to the works of M. V. Frunze. In a collection of his works published in 1929 he elaborated on the correlation of man and technology in a future war, the nature of that war, the harmonious development of all arms of the service, and the role of the rear and the front. Frunze advocated having an integral military doctrine to define the character of the armed forces, the methods of combat training, and troop control on the basis of the prevailing views on the nature and methods of dealing with military tasks. Frunze made a profound generalization of the experience of the Civil War and proposed guidelines that later became the basis for regulations and manuals without which the existence of the army of a new type, the Soviet Red Army, would be unthinkable.

In the late 20s B. M. Shaposhnikov published a fundamental work, *Brain of the Army*, analyzing extensive historical material, giving a comprehensive appraisal of the role of the General Staff and setting some important principles of military strategy. He also wrote the well-known books *Cavalry* and *On the Vistula*.

I still think, as I did then, that the title *Brain of the Army* is quite wrong in reference to the Red Army. The Red Army's "brain", from the outset, has been the Party's Central Committee, since no major military question was ever tackled without

it. The title is better suited for the old tsarist army, whose General Staff was, indeed, the army's "brain".

A. I. Yegorov wrote a number of important military-historical works, including *The Rout of Denikin.*

That was when M. N. Tukhachevsky, one of the most talented Soviet theorists, also began to publish his works. He came out with many far-sighted ideas on the nature of the future war, produced a profound study of the new tenets governing theory, tactics and strategy, and the operational art, and showed the indissoluble link between military principles and practices, on the one hand, and the social system and the country's production potential, on the other.

Stormy discussions erupted around the book of V. K. Triandafillov, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Red Army, entitled *Nature of Operations of Modern Armies,* which immediately won broad popularity. The author expressed bold and profound views on the condition and prospects of the armies of that time and outlined the principal ways of their technical equipment and organization. Triandafillov wrote this about the role of tanks in a future war: "No one now questions the tactical significance of tanks [illegible] automatic

of artificial obstacles in defence and the lag of the means of suppression (artillery) behind the defensive facilites make tanks one of the powerful offensive instruments in a future war."

The second part of Triandafillov's work dealt with the operational art, data on the offensive and defensive capabilities of a division, a corps, an army, and an army group, as well as questions of approaching the battlefield, duration and depth of an operation, frontage of the offensive, defensive operations etc. Most unfortunately, Triandafillov met a tragic death in an air crash in 1931, and did not complete his work on the problems of a future war and important principles of Soviet military strategy and operational art.

There was a wealth of truly interesting material for every professional military man in the works of S. S. Kamenev, A. I. Kork, I. P. Uborevich, I. E. Yakir, and of a few other leading commanders and theoreticians. In short, there was

ally a lot for us to take in — so much that we hadn't time r it all.

A creative atmosphere reigned at our classes. We argued a reat deal. I remember that who we argued with most was ı. V. Gorbatov, a brigade commander in the 2nd Cavalry Corps. Gorbatov was a well-educated and most knowledgeable commander, and it was always interesting to draw him into a discussion.

We thoroughly studied several important tactical and special topics and familiarized ourselves with specimens of the latest weapons and equipment then being introduced in the Red Army.

How the Red Army was technically equipped at the time? n 1920-1925 we had mainly to be content with the leftovers rom the old tsarist army which had been quite backward. ndustry was still unable to supply the Red Army with modern combat equipment, though everything possible was being done to improve the technical state of the army and navy.

The Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets specially discussed the setting up of a dependable economic base for USSR defence and provision of the Red Army with new equipment. The Party Central Committee initiated the revision of old models of small arms, artillery and aircraft in order to select and perfect the best weapons. More funds were allotted for the technical equipment of the army, and metal-working factories, including those putting out arms, were rehabilitated.

From the very beginning the Party succeeded in making the construction of a Soviet air force and navy a truly every man's countrywide undertaking. In 1921 the Council of Labour and Defence passed a special resolution to work out a minimal programme for building an air fleet. Tens of millions of gold roubles were allocated. In spring 1923, a voluntary society of air fleet friends was formed. It collected 6 million gold roubles in two years, and over 300 military planes were built on that money. As a result, no more aircraft were bought abroad ever since 1925.

Since 1922, the Komsomol has been patron of the Soviet Navy. Three voluntary drafts brought 8,000 Komsomols to the Navy. The Navy which then consisted of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets, squadrons of warships on the Barents, Caspian and

White Seas, and several lake and river flotillas was brought back to strength and organizationally improved. The battleship *Oktyabrskaya Revolyutsia* (formerly *Gangut*) and seven destroyers were modernized and overhauled in the Baltic, the cruiser *Profintern* was being completed, while the cruiser *Chervona Ukraina* and some 60 overhauled warships and auxiliary vessels were being recommissioned on the Black Sea. On the whole, the rehabilitation and modernization of the Soviet Navy was completed by 1928.

Designers were called upon to develop new models of weapons. In 1924, the USSR Revolutionary Military Council approved the Rules for the Commission on Military Inventions and its membership: S. S. Kamenev, M. N. Tukhachevsky, I. S. Unshlikht, and others. Several research and design institutions were set up. Prominent scientists A. N. Krylov and S. A. Chaplygin were consultants for Kosartop (Commission for Special Artillery Experiments); experimental models of new Soviet planes and aircraft engines were developed at the famous TSAGI (Central Institute of Aerodynamics), where N. N. Polikarpov, A. N. Tupolev and others built test models of fighters and bombers, among them the TB-1 which was superior to foreign planes of its type.

K. E. Tsiolkovsky and F. A. Tsander made an outstanding contribution in the field of jet propulsion and space navigation, while every assistance was given in the field of firearms to the talented inventors N. I. Tikhomirov, F. V. Tokarev, and others. In 1927 V. A. Degtyaryov and V. G. Fyodorov developed a new light machine-gun which was superior to foreign makes in design and quality. At the same time, we developed the 76-mm regimental gun, and also an anti-aircraft gun.

Taken in general, however, the Red Army of the 20s was, of course, poorly equipped. This was due to the country's economic difficulties and the insufficient development of the war industry. We were short of heavy, and especially of light machine-guns, and we had no automatic rifle as yet while the old 7.62-mm rifle needed modernization. The artillery was obsolete and badly worn out. By the end of the 20s we had only 7,000 pieces, most of them light guns. Anti-aircraft, tank and anti-tank artillery was non-existent. By 1928 we had only 1,394 military aircraft, mostly of old makes, and about a hundred

nks and armoured cars. The army was poorly motorized: y the end of 1928 the troops had only 350 trucks, 700 passen-er cars and 67 crawler tractors. It should be remembered, owever, that until 1928 we had neither an automobile nor a tor industry.

Meanwhile, the big imperialist powers were building up ir armed forces at crash rates. In the event of a war, tain could turn out 2,500 tanks a month, and France 00; their air forces numbered tens of thousands of planes, and troops were being quickly motorized. In short, our recent nd potential) adversaries were far ahead in armaments, mpared to the First World War.

When comparing these data, one marvels at the immense fference in starting points, objectively determined by history, which we began our competition with the capitalist world. egitimate pride takes hold of me in the social system which nabled us to catch up with and outstrip the military establish-ments of the most advanced world powers in what was an stonishingly short time, and in the people and army which were later able to crush the most powerful imperialist opponent.

It was clear that only a large-scale industry could provide the Red Army and Navy with up-to-date arms. Industrialization was the only way to ensure the defensive capacity of the Soviet Union. Technology was crucial. And our military leaders of that time were well aware of it. They had the right perspective of the nature and the specific features of the future war.

As early as 1925, M. V. Frunze said the following in his report to the January Plenary Meeting of the Russian Commu-nist Party's Central Committee on the results of the military reform:

"Many of our comrades, especially those, I believe, who have fought in the Civil War, probably think in terms of the Civil War era. I make bold to declare that these sentiments are very dangerous, because a future war will not in the least resemble the Civil War. Of course, it will be in the nature of a class civil war in the sense that there will be whiteguards on the enemy's side and that we, too, will have allies in the enemy camp. But it will be quite unlike our Civil War both in arms and methods. We will face a superb army equipped with all the latest technical improvements, and if our army

lacks these improvements, our prospects may prove most unfavourable. This should be kept in mind when we deal with the question of the country's general preparations for defence."

In the spring of 1930, we finished our courses and returned to our units.

I commanded the 2nd Cavalry Brigade for over a year, and I must say that I learned a great deal and greatly augmented my knowledge of theory and practical matters.

Towards the end of 1930 I learned that I was being considered for the post of assistant cavalry inspector of the Red Army. Although the Inspectorate's activity was held in high esteem in the cavalry, I must confess that I was not happy at the news. I had grown attached to the 7th Samara Division and thought myself an indispensable member of that friendly family.

But the question was settled, and I had to start packing to go to Moscow. There was not much to pack, however—a greatcoat and a few changes of underwear. All our family belongings went into one suitcase. None of us commanders had any other property, and that was considered entirely normal.

One evening Rokossovsky called over the phone and informed me that Moscow had appointed me to the new post.

"How long will you take to get ready?" he asked.

"No more than two hours," I replied.

"We can't let you go like that," Rokossovsky said. "After all, you are a veteran of the 7th Division, and we will see you off properly. That is the general wish of the commanders and political instructors of the 2nd Brigade."

I was greatly moved.

In a couple of days a dinner was held by the commanders and the political staff of the 39th and 40th Cavalry regiments, at which divisional commanders were also present. Many kind and heartfelt words were addressed to me, which I have remembered all my life.

Next morning I was ready to leave. Once again I called at the units to say good-bye to the commanders and men.

Before leaving I visited Minsk which I had grown fond of. I had lived there for eight years, and learned to know and like

he kindhearted and hardworking Byelorussians. Before ny eyes Byelorussia had eliminated the consequences of two vars.

In the evening my late wife (Alexandra), two-year-old laughter Era, and I left for Moscow.

## Chapter 5

# AT THE RED ARMY'S CAVALRY INSPECTORATE. IN COMMAND OF THE 4th CAVALRY DIVISION.

At the time, the Cavalry Inspectorate was headed by Semy[illegible] Mikhailovich Budenny.

Upon arriving at my new post, I at once went to report t[illegible] my new superiors. However, Budenny was absent. His privat[illegible] secretary, P. A. Belov, told me that Budenny was studying in a special group at the Academy and had deputized all matters to his first deputy, Corps Commander I. D. Kosogov.

I reported to Kosogov and thereupon was introduced to B. K. Verkhovsky, F. R. Žemaitis, P. P. Sobennikov, I. V. Tyulenev and A. Y. Treiman, all Assistant Cavalry Inspectors and all of them very capable commanders.

After the introductions, Kosogov suggested that I should assume responsibility for cavalry combat training as I seem[illegible] best equipped to handle that end.

In about a month I felt quite at home on my new job. Some three months later we had a general Party meeting of all the Inspectorates and the Combat Training department of the People's Commissariat for the Army and Navy.[1] I was elected secre[illegible]

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[1] Since various [illegible] her on, the [illegible] [illegible]ouncil of People's Commissars there was a permanent Defen[illegible] Commission headed by V. M. Molotov. This commission made preliminary studies of and elaborated on the main, cardinal aspects of building up the armed forces and strengthening the country's defences. It then submitted its studies and projects for consideration and legal endorsement to the Council of Labour and Defence.

tary of the Party bureau, and I. V. Tyulenev was elected my deputy.

The members of our Party branch devoted much energy to their immediate duties, often working overtime, but they also found time for social activity. The more popular form of this was giving lectures at factories and other civilian enterprises, organizations and offices. Industrial and office workers received the army Communists very warmly and were eager listeners, especially when the lecture concerned the international situation or the latest decisions of the Party and Government.

In the late twenties and early thirties the international situation deteriorated. A group of imperialist states — above all Germany, Japan and Italy — whose governments, suiting the will of the monopolies, were bent on resolving the economic crisis by re-dividing the world had made its position quite clear. In 1931 Japan, without declaring war, invaded China and occupied Manchuria. Of course, the purpose of the Japa-

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It was later found that the USSR Revolutionary Military Council duplicated the work of the Defence Commission. It was therefore abolished in 1934, while the People's Commissariat for the Army and Navy was renamed People's Commissariat for Defence. A Military Council was formed under the People's Commissariat whose decisions were subject to approval by the People's Commissar and became effective by his order.

In 1937, the Council of People's Commissars abolished the Council of Labour and Defence, and reorganized the Defence Commission under the USSR Council of People's Commissars as the Defence Committee. V. M. Molotov remained Chairman of the Defence Committee, with J. V. Stalin, K. Ye. Voroshilov, and others, as members. The USSR People's Commissariat for the Navy was formed at this time, with P. A. Smirnov at the head.

The Chief Military Council of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army was formed under the People's Commissariat for Defence in 1938. The Council included: K. Ye. Voroshilov (Chairman), V. K. Blücher, S. M. Budenny, G. I. Kulik, L. Z. Mekhlis, J. V. Stalin, I. F. Fedko, B. M. Shaposhnikov and Ye A. Shchadenko. At the same time the Chief Military Council of the Navy was formed, including: P. A. Smirnov (Chairman), L. M. Galler, A. A. Zhdanov, I S. Isakov, N. G. Kuznetsov, G. I. Levchenko, and others. The two Chief Military Councils of the two People's Commissariats considered at their meetings the ways and means of strengthening the country's defences and building up the Army and Navy.

Military councils directly subordinate to the USSR People's Commissar for Defence were formed in military districts and in fleets and armies.— *Author.*

nese government was to set up a springboard for attacking the Soviet Union.

In January 1933, the fascists came to power in Germany and from the very start made it their goal to win world supremacy. Little did the peoples of Britain, the USA, and France suspect what disservice the imperialist forces of their countries did them by helping Germany to rehabilitate her heavy industry. Seventy per cent of Germany's long-term loans had been granted by the United States. The "injections" of foreign capital increased after Hitler came to power.

Germany, Japan and Italy converted their economies to serve military needs. Their military budgets swelled to the extreme. The aggressive European states had taken a "running start" that enabled them later, in the latter half of the 1930s to start a large-scale war. Germany's armed forces topped one million, while another two million Germans were members of Nazi paramilitary organizations. In the event of war, the strength of the Nazi Germany's forces could be increased by five or six times. The peacetime Italian armed forces numbered 400,000, but in wartime they could easily be increased five-fold.

Radical measures had to be taken in these circumstances to build up our country's defences. It was not so much a question of quantity. Our armed forces had to rise to a new level in quality. A succession of measures were taken to heighten the capacity of our army and navy. The main link was equipment. The grand task of saturating the Soviet Armed Forces with modern technology could be achieved only through industrialization.

At its 14th Congress at the end of 1925 the Party adopted the course of socialist industrialization — meaning the development of heavy industry on the basis of electrification and technical reequipment and modernization of industry, transport, and agriculture. Two years later, the 15th Party Congress issued the following directive for the first five-year plan:

"Considering the possibility of a military attack on our proletarian state by capitalist powers, it is necessary in the five-year plan to pay the utmost attention to the rapid development of those branches of the economy in general, and industry in

particular, which play the leading part in ensuring the country's defences and economic stability in wartime."

Here I would like to digress a bit. On the whole, the nations of the world recognize that it was Soviet soldiers and Soviet arms that saved Europe from the brown plague, and that the defeat of Nazi Germany was the greatest historic feat of the Soviet people. I think that the foundation for it was laid when the Soviet people responded to the call of the Party and got down to industrializing their country.

I do not have the requisite data at hand, nor is it my purpose, to make a comprehensive analysis of the importance of industrialization for the development of the economy, improving the life of the people, strengthening the collective farm system, etc. As for the armed forces and the outcome of the fight for freedom and independence in the Great Patriotic War, they *directly depended on the rate of industrialization* and its effective implementation.

We might have delayed the steep rise in heavy industry for some five or seven years and given the people more consumer goods more quickly. Our people had earned this a thousand times. This was certainly a most seductive thing. But had we done so, who can tell how that grimmest period which we call the initial period of the war, would have ended, and where — before what city or on what river — the fascist troops would have been stopped?

The wisdom and acumen of the Party which history itself has once and for all qualified as correct, the rightly chosen path of development, and the heroism shown by the people at their work in those years, laid the foundation for our victories in the Second World War.

The 16th and 17th Party Congresses pointed to the steadily increasing danger of war, and firmly demanded that the effort of the people be concentrated on enhancing the power of the Red Army and Navy. A specific directive was issued to step up industrial development, especially of the iron and steel industry, to accumulate state reserves, and to radically modernize transport. It was decided to expand the mobilization capacity of the entire economy; to locate and build industrial units so that in the event of an enemy attack industry could be quickly geared to military production and the mobilization plan.

Besides Communists of the Cavalry Inspectorate, our Party branch included Communists from other inspectorates—those of infantry and fire training, artillery, signals and engineers, the Division of Combat Training, and other divisions of the People's Commissariat. We did our best to gear the personnel of the Inspectorates and divisions to carrying out the tasks set by the Party, the Government and the People's Commissar. The People's Commissariat for the Army and Navy, and its leading core of Party members, was then occupied with a number of most important matters. Here are some of them.

The military reform in the Red Army and Navy was completed. Considerable charges had been brought about in the armed forces. The whole process of training was improved, the troops were better disciplined, the principle of one-man command had been enforced at all levels, and conditions were created to perfect the skill of commanders. We could move on.

In the middle of 1929 the Central Committee of the Party adopted a resolution "On the State of USSR Defence". It said that its policy is aimed at the radical technical reconstruction of the army, air force, and navy. While modernizing the existing equipment, the USSR Revolutionary Military Council and the People's Commissariat for the Army and Navy were instructed to develop experimental samples, and thereupon introduce on a mass scale modern types of artillery, chemical defence equipment, and armoured vehicles, as well as launch serial production of new types of aircraft and engines.

This resolution was the basis of the first five-year military development plan. Among other things, this plan envisaged activating new technical arms, motorizing and reorganizing the old arms, training technical personnel in large numbers, and teaching the entire personnel the use of new arms. In January 1931, the USSR Revolutionary Military Council finalized the schedule of measures for 1931 to 1933, thus completing the elaboration of the first five-year military development plan.[1]

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[1] Fulfilment of this plan saw great advances in the army and navy, but radical technical reconstruction still lay ahead. It required great material resources and new production capacities.— *Author.*

In view of the new tasks, some important changes were introduced in the central military apparatus. Very important, for instance, was instituting a Chief of Armaments in charge of the technical modernization of the army. The post was held by I. P. Uborevich up to 1931, and after that by M. N. Tukhachevsky. In 1929 a Division for the Mechanization and Motorization of the Red Army was formed under the People's Commissariat for the Army and Navy, headed for a number of years by I. A. Khalepsky and K. B. Kalinovsky who were great enthusiasts and experts in tank building. Armour sections were organized in the military districts.

Up to 1929 we had practically no tank-building industry and no designers and engineers for it. Still, the Party and Government were aware that armour would play an important role in any future war. They set the military establishment the relevant tasks. The USSR Revolutionary Military Council issued a special directive which envisaged the building of the following types of fighting machines: baby tanks, medium tanks, heavy tanks, and bridge-laying tanks. Their characteristics and performances were defined. Very soon, Soviet designers developed new models of tanks. Between 1931 and 1935 inclusive, the Red Army received the T-27 baby tank, the T-24 and T-26 light tanks, the high-speed BT tracked tank, the T-28 medium tank, then the T-35 heavy tank, and the T-37 amphibious baby tank. Under the first five-year plan industry turned out nearly 4,000 tanks and baby tanks.

The Soviet military command lost no time in drafting a new development plan for the Red Army's air force. In early 1930, the Revolutionary Military Council endorsed a programme for developing various types of land-based aircraft, seaplanes, air balloons, and aerial photography equipment, with emphasis on bomber and fighter aviation. In two years an organizational plan for the air force was launched, in which strategic, tactical and operational problems were considered from the viewpoint of national defence in the event of an attack. Long-range bombers were organized into large air units capable of independent operational missions. A year later, these large units of heavy bombers were merged into corps.

The Red Army's Cavalry Inspectorate worked in close contact with the Combat Training Division. There I first met

Alexander Mikhailovich Vasilevsky, with whom we worked together a lot during the Great Patriotic War as representatives of the Supreme Command. Vasilevsky was a first-class specialist already at the time, having studied the specificity of military training most closely during many years as regimental commander. He was greatly respected in the division. Also known is the fruitful activity of A. J. Lapin, who headed the Combat Training Division, and his successor A. I. Sedjakin.

In the summer of 1931, the Central Committee of the Party adopted a resolution on "The Red Army's Command and Political Personnel" which summed up the major achievements and shortcomings in education and combat training. Special attention in the resolution was paid to extending the programme of technical training, increasing the number of higher-level engineers and technicians, and improving political education. By then the general system of training Red Army commanders had essentially been worked out.

As for standard military schools, stress was laid on air, tank, artillery, and technical service schools. The number of trainees increased two-fold (in 1924 their number was about 25,000). To extend the training of senior commanders it was decided to convert the respective departments of the Military Technical Academy into the Military Academy of Mechanization and Motorization, the Artillery Academy, the Academy of Chemical Defence, the Military Academy of Electrical Engineering, and the Academy of Military Engineers. It was also decided to found a new Military Transport Academy, and to considerably expand enrolment at the M. V. Frunze Military Academy and Military Political Academy. Thus the number of higher military educational establishments was boosted 50 per cent, while the student body grew from 3,200 in 1928 to 16,500 in 1932.

The Combat Training Division based all its work on the latest directives of the Party. It was aware that the fighting efficiency of the army depended above all on knowledge of the new equipment and the intricacies of modern warfare. Scores of measures were developed and implemented, aimed at training personnel not only at military educational establishments and various refresher courses, but also during intensive combat training within military units.

By that time nearly all of the commanders had a specialized military education. Training time for commanders was 42 hours a month instead of 6-8 in 1929. Along with tactical and fire training, much attention was devoted to technical training under an obligatory minimum programme for each arm and each category of commander. Courses in new equipment and weapons were introduced for commanders in reserve during their refresher training rallies.

Important work was being done by the staff of the Artillery Inspectorate under artillery inspector N. M. Rogovsky. He was an expert artilleryman and was greatly respected by the troops. Commanders of military districts and of formations, and artillery engineers, looked to him for advice.

People in charge of artillery were faced with many an in-...ate problem. The guns were considerably worn out and ...stly outdated. Essentially, they had come down to us from ...e old Russian army.

In the middle of 1929, however, the USSR Revolutionary ...ilitary Council elaborated a five-year programme for the ...e-equipment of Red Army artillery, envisaging an increase ...n its fire power and the rate, range, and accuracy of fire. Large artillery designing bureaus were set up. Construction of ordnance factories began, at which production of new modernized artillery systems, and ammunition for them, was later organized. Training of engineers and technicians was launched. Between 1928 and 1933 inclusive the capacity of ordnance factories increased more than six times over, and the production of small-calibre guns — 35 times over.

Towards the end of that period of my work at the People's Commissariat for Defence it began drawing up the second five-year plan of Red Army development covering 1934-1938. The Party's principal directive was to complete the technical rebuilding and re-equipment of the armed forces by introducing on a large scale such decisive means of repulsing aggression as aircraft, tanks, and artillery. In pursuance of this Party guideline, the Council of Labour and Defence adopted a programme for building up the Navy in 1933-1938; a resolution on the system of equipping the Red Army with artillery in the second five-year-plan period, and an air force development plan for 1935-1937.

Speaking of the People's Commissariat for Defence in the early thirties, I cannot but mention the activity of its central Party bureau which efficiently guided our Party organizations and enjoyed great prestige. All central divisions of the People's Commissariat and the Red Army inspectorates worked most diligently, with initiative and energy. Classes in Marxism-Leninism, general education, and cultural work, were all well organized. Our Party meetings were lively affairs and criticism was frequently voiced from the floor.

In that period the Red Army's Cavalry Inspectorate enjoyed great prestige among cavalry units, for besides its direct tasks of inspection it arranged field and staff exercises, war games and various rallies for the exchange of know-how in combat training.

In general, the cavalry was in the forefront of combat training in those days, and it was indeed no accident that the best cavalry commanders were posted to the new arms of the service, notably tank and motorized units. In the line of my duty at the Inspectorate I took part in drawing up regulations and manuals for different arms and services.

I must say that exceptional importance was attached to the content of Red Army regulations. They reflected the latest achievements of military science, measured up to the level of current technical developments, and took into account the changes in the nature of military operations. The armed forces received the first edition of manuals summing up the experience of World War I and the Civil War, as well as the changes due to the reform, in 1924-1925. They were mostly temporary manuals — Interior Service Regulations, Navy Regulations, and field manuals for the cavalry, artillery, and armour.

The main point made in all these regulations and manuals, and fully reflected in the Temporary Field Service Regulations (1929), Part II (corps, division), was that a battle is a combined-arms operation whose success depended on cooperation between all arms. The Regulations detailed the tactics of bringing in armour, organizing anti-tank, air, and chemical defences, and employing aviation and engineer troops.

A number of new regulations and manuals became effective, replacing or supplementing those issued in 1924-1925. These

cluded the Temporary Field Camouflage Manual, the Combat Regulations for the Air Force, the Telephony and Telegraphy Manual, the Underwater Mining Manual, and others.

To close this subject, I should like to note that everyone thought very highly of the Temporary Field Service Regulations of 1936, in which the major aspects of modern warfare were set forth and substantiated. On the whole, by the mid-30s the Red Army had an advanced and solid military doctrine, as set down in a system of competent regulations and manuals.

In 1931, as I have already said, A. I. Yegorov became Chief of Red Army Staff. Though the Cavalry Inspectorate, by virtue of its work, had little to do with the Staff, we knew that most of the personnel were pleased with the new appointment.

We all held that M. N. Tukhachevsky, then First Deputy to the People's Commissar, A. I. Yegorov, Chief of Red Army Staff, and such a talented theoretician as V. K. Triandafillov, who was Deputy Chief of Red Army Staff, would all capably assist K. Ye. Voroshilov in his work as People's Commissar for Defence.

As a staff member of the Cavalry Inspectorate, I had the good fortune to become more closely acquainted with Mikhail Tukhachevsky. As I mentioned earlier, I first met him during the suppression of the Antonov kulak revolt in 1921. He was a handsome man of athletic proportions and a most impressive appearance. We had noted then that he was no coward. At the head of but a small force, he often visited areas infested with bandits.

As First Deputy to the People's Commissar for Defence, Tukhachevsky did intensive organizational, creative, and theoretical work. What I admired in Tukhachevsky was his versatile command of various aspects of military science. A clever, knowledgeable professional, he was splendidly conversant with both tactical and strategic problems. He well understood the role the various arms could play in a modern war and took a most creative approach to all problems.

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In all his fundamental deductions and arguments concerning strategy and tactics, Tukhachevsky emphasized that the rapid scientific and technical development that was going on

in our country and abroad would exercise a decisive influence on the organization of the armed forces and the conduct of any future war.

Already in the thirties, Tukhachevsky warned that our No 1 enemy was Germany, which was intensively preparing for a big war, and that this would doubtless be against the USSR. In writings published later, he repeatedly stressed that Germany was establishing a powerful invasion army consisting of strong air and airborne forces and highly mobile troops, mostly mechanized infantry and armour. He noted Germany's rapidly mounting industrial potential and its facilities for mass producing combat aircraft and tanks.

In the summer of 1931, out in the field camps of the 1st Cavalry Corps, I drafted the first and second parts of the Service Regulations for the Red Army Cavalry, assisted by Gusev, commanding officer of a cavalry regiment, and other comrades from the 1st Cavalry Division. In autumn, having been discussed by the Inspectorate staff, they were put before Tukhachevsky for his consideration.

With I. D. Kosogov, Deputy Chief Inspector, I more than once defended one or another point in the service regulations. But I must admit that we were often disarmed by Tukhachevsky's logical and well-grounded arguments. We were also grateful to him for his brilliant suggestions which greatly improved our draft.

After Tukhachevsky's amendments the service regulations were adopted, providing the cavalry with a fine combat training manual.

The last time I saw Tukhachevsky was in 1931 at a Party meeting where he delivered a report on the international situation. He spoke conclusively of our country's growing might, the broad vistas ahead of our socialist economy, science, engineering, and culture. Dwelling on the role of our Communist Party in building the new state and army, he had warm words for Lenin, whom he had met many times and with whom he had often worked.

At this meeting, Tukhachevsky aired views he had set out in a monograph he was then writing on novel problems of warfare. We were less conversant with these problems and avidly drank in his every word. Tukhachevsky was an ace of

military thinking, a star of the first magnitude among the great soldiers of the Red Army.

Addressing the Second Session of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR in 1936, Tukhachevsky again called attention to the grave and imminent danger presented by Nazi Germany. He backed up his stirring patriotic speech with a serious factual analysis of the German military potential and its aggressiveness.

The Cavalry Inspectorate revised the organizational pattern of cavalry units and formations, their armaments and combat methods.

After lengthy debates inside the Inspectorate and a thorough discussion with cavalry commanders we decided that a cavalry division was, henceforth, to consist of four cavalry regiments, a mechanized regiment and an artillery regiment. A cavalry regiment was to consist of four squadrons of horsemen, a machine-gun squadron, a regimental battery, an air defence platoon, a signals platoon, an engineer platoon, a chemical platoon and the appropriate supplies services. The artillery regiment was to incorporate a battalion of 122-mm howitzers and a battalion of 76-mm guns. The mechanized regiment was to be equipped with BT-5 tanks.

The Red Army cavalry was thus equipped with technical and fire facilities that greatly altered its organization and its combat methods. Henceforth, it could open the way for itself with its own fire power and a tank attack, penetrating the enemy's defences and crushing him.

The new service regulations and the various instructions drafted by the Cavalry Inspectorate were based on the basic guidelines of deep penetration and combat in depth.

Substantiation of the theory of deep penetration was a major achievement of the Soviet military art. Generally, deep penetration meant a concentrated employment of tanks, aircraft, artillery, and paratroops, that is employment of modern, well-equipped armies. The essence of deep penetration amounted to the following. Initial objective: to break through the enemy defence line by a simultaneous strike to the full tactical depth of his defences. Next objective: to send mechanized troops into the breach at once, so that in cooperation with the air force they advance through the entire operational

depth of the enemy defences until the enemy grouping is defeated.

We were aware that the hostilities would be conducted by armies of many millions of men over vast territories, and that the success of deep penetration would be ensured by aviation and artillery ploughing up the enemy defences to their full depth, coupled with vigorous action on the flanks and in the rear of the enemy groupings in order to envelop and annihilate them.

The science of warfare espoused by the Red Army commanders was modified to suit the emergence of new weapons and the country's over-all progress; of course, with reference to the combat power of our probable enemy.

While supplying the army with modern means of combat, the Central Committee of the Party helped the military leadership to assimilate the changes in the science of warfare. To expedite this, problems of military strategy, operational art, and army and naval rearmament, were regularly discussed at their meetings by the Politbureau and Chief Military Council. District, fleet and air force commanders were usually invited to these meetings. The adopted guidelines were brought to the notice of the entire command personnel of the army, navy and air force.

We on the Inspectorate staff attached special importance to the cavalry's rearmament, new organizational set-up, and new service regulations, because most of our units were deployed on key strategic positions and near the frontiers — which naturally meant that the cavalry should be in a state of enhanced combat preparedness.

One day I was summoned by Kosogov, First Deputy to the Chief Cavalry Inspector, who told me I had been recommended to Voroshilov as a suitable candidate for the post of Commander of the 4th Cavalry Division. Kosogov sounded me out on whether I would like going to the Byelorussian Military District. I said I considered the appointment as commander of such a famous division a special honour. I knew the district well, I said, having worked there earlier for some ten years. I was acquainted with L. Y. Weiner, commander of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, whom I respected as a seasoned soldier.

Kosogov then informed me that Budenny would see me on this matter. This occurred several days later, after the People's Commissar had signed my new posting. Parting with me, Budenny observed in a voice packed with emotion: "The 4th Division has always been a crack division and so it must remain."

It gives me pleasure to say that we achieved this after a dedicated effort by the commanders, the political workers, and the Party organization.

Since Budenny has so excellently described the spectacular victories of the 4th Cavalry Division in his book, *The Glorious Path*, I will confine myself to a few of my own recollections going back to the time when I was in command of this fine division.

Named after K. Ye. Voroshilov, it was the nucleus of the legendary First Mounted Army. In bitter Civil War battles it displayed courage beyond compare and mass heroism.

Up to 1931, the division was quartered in the Leningrad Military District (Gatchina, Peterhof and Detskoye Selo), in places where the Cavalry Guards had been stationed before the Revolution. The glorious traditions that the division had created during the Civil War were carried forward in peacetime. It preserved them jealously, and instilled in recruits a lofty sense of responsibility and military duty.

In 1932, the division was rushed to Slutsk in the Byelorussian Military District. As I learned later, the move had been prompted by what were said to be operational reasons, though there was at the time not the slightest need for it. And since the quarters in Slutsk were totally unprepared, the division had to waste some 18 months building its own barracks, stables, headquarters, dwellings, depots, and other facilities. As a result, a splendidly trained division was reduced to an inefficient labour force. What made matters worse was that shortages of building materials, the rainy weather, and other unfavourable factors precluded timely preparation for the winter's cold, affecting morale and combat worthiness. Discipline grew lax, and the disease incidence among the horses increased.

The command of the 3rd Corps, of which the 4th Cavalry Division was part, could offer no help as its other formations

had likewise been rushed to the military district and were the same plight.

In the spring of 1933, I. P. Uborevich, who was then in charge of the Byelorussian Military District, made a brief visit of inspection and found the 4th Cavalry Division in a frightful state. Previously, it is true, he had not assisted it in construction and did not take the conditions faced by the division into consideration. Now he hastened to put all the blame on G. P. Kletkin, the Division Commander.

It goes without saying that the commanding officer is responsible for the division, being its sole authority. But his superior officer should by virtue of his office and as a senior comrade have been more objective. Hot-tempered Uborevich, however, notified Voroshilov, then People's Commissar for Defence, demanding immediate demotion of the CO of the 4th Cavalry Division, G. P. Kletkin. Though there were indeed shortcomings in evidence, Uborevich had laid it on too thick, saying the division was not combatworthy and had squandered all its previous fine traditions.

K. Ye. Voroshilov found Uborevich's message a most bitter pill to swallow. After all, he had been associated with the division for many years, and had more than once led it into attack. It had raised a whole constellation of gifted commanders and political workers. Chief Cavalry Inspector Budenny, too, had a warm spot in his heart for this division which he had helped to organize and had also led into battle.

Voroshilov briefed Budenny on Uborevich's report and asked him to suggest a new man for divisional commander.

Then came the day when my wife, my daughter and I boarded the train for those familiar places in Byelorussia. I knew Byelorussia well, and was fond of it — its picturesque scenery, its lovely woods, lakes and rivers. The hunter and angler that I was, I was happy to return to these wonderful parts. During my previous term of service in Byelorussia, I had got a very good idea of the terrain throughout, from north to south. Oh, how useful this proved later! And what mattered most to me was that I had many friends there, especially in the cavalry.

True, I had little knowledge of the 4th Division, having visited it but once in 1931, and even then very briefly. I hardly knew anyone there, with the exception of Divisional Com-

mander Kletkin, his deputy for political affairs N. A. Yung, the chief of staff A. I. Vertogradsky, commander of the mechanized regiment V. V. Novikov, and a few other officers. Yet when one does not know one's subordinates, their merits, faults, and abilities, one cannot count on success, especially in command of a large unit.

In Slutsk spring had played havoc with the roads. We found ourselves amidst a sea of mud and my wife lost her galoshes several times before we got to the carriage. My little girl, whom I carried, asked:

"Why don't they have pavements here as they do at home, in Sokolniki?"

I replied: "We'll also have pavements and a lovely square here. But later."

For living quarters we had to be content provisionally with a very small room which the divisional chemical defence chief, Dvortsov, kindly placed at our disposal, moving out with his family to just one small room. We put up with this, because we knew how difficult the housing situation was and that we could not ask for anything better until we had built it ourselves.

Half an hour later, I called at the divisional HQ across the courtyard. Divisional Commander Kletkin was out; I was told he was feeling unwell and would not be able to receive me. I could easily guess his state of mind and did not insist on seeing him at once. I was briefed on the situation in the division by Nikolai Yung, the deputy commander for political affairs, and Alexander Vertogradsky, the divisional chief of staff, for whose laconiç but thorough account I was most grateful. But, I still had to study the situation in the units on the spot, size up the shortcomings, discover their causes and work out, in collaboration with the command personnel and political workers, the way of remedying them.

That day I also called on the 19th Manych Cavalry Regiment, the oldest in the division, whose commander, Fyodor Kostenko, was a veteran of Budenny's First Mounted Army. Though I did not know him personally, I had heard much of this conscientious commander, that he was a cavalry enthusiast who invariably participated in all equestrian contests then quite common in the cavalry.

When the Great Patriotic War broke out, Kostenko was commanding the 26th Army which defended our frontiers in the Ukraine. The men under his command put up so stubborn a resistance that, suffering heavy losses, the Nazis failed to penetrate into the Ukraine in those early days of the war. Regrettably, he and his favourite elder boy Pyotr, were killed in the bitter fighting at Kharkov when he was Deputy Commander of the South-Western Front. I remember that when still at school, Pyotr Kostenko had most diligently applied himself to military studies, being particularly fond of riding and swordmanship. Kostenko was prond of his boy, and hoped he would make a fine cavalry commander one day. His hopes came true.

Later, I acquainted myself closely at first hand with the situation in the 20th, 21st and 23rd cavalry regiments, the 4th Mounted Artillery Regiment and the 4th Mechanized Regiment, and then in the divisional squadrons. I found the 20th Regiment, then quartered in the village of Konyukhi 20 kilometres from Slutsk, in a most deplorable plight. Its commander at the time was V. V. Kryukov, the self-same man who in the past war commanded a cavalry corps that was mentioned more than once in the orders of the Supreme Commander. The regiment was stationed near the state frontier and was, as it were, the division's vanguard.

However, despite the privations, morale was high. Even the officers' wives who had but recently parted with good flats outside Leningrad did not grumble. They only complained that there were no schools hereabouts for the children.

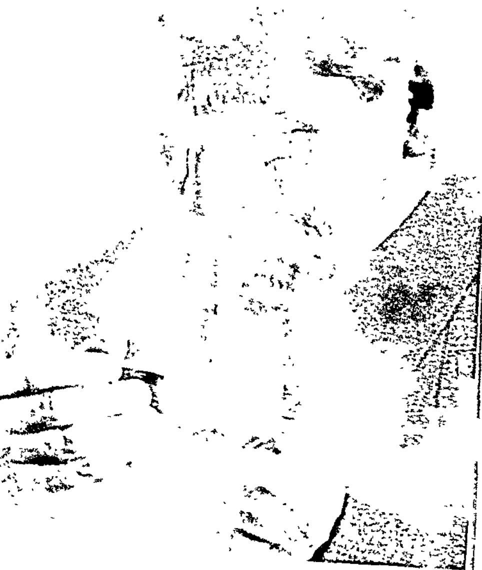
Commander of the 21st Regiment was I. N. Muzychenko, a man I had known from the 14th Separate Cavalry Brigade in which he had been assistant military commissar during the Civil War. When the Great Patriotic War broke out, he was commanding the 6th Army in the Ukraine and had his headquarters in Lvov. For a number of reasons he had had bad luck when the war began. Heavily outnumbered by the enemy, he was compelled to retreat to the Ukrainian hinterland; heavily wounded, he was taken prisoner, and for the duration of the war languished in pow camps in Germany.

The 21st Cavalry Regiment produced a somewhat better impression. It was well organized, the men looked smart, and there was general good order. One could feel the command

Parade on Red Square, Moscow

Early five-year-plan building projects. Dnieper Hydropower Station, one of the first big achievements of socialist industrialization

The Magnitogorsk iron-and-steel works



Joseph Stalin

Cavalry commanders' refresher course, 1924-1925. Front row (r. to l.) first, I Kh Bagramyan, third, A I Yeremenko, fifth, chief of the refresher course Corps Commander M A Batorsky Second row (r to l) first, Georgi Zhukov, fifth, K K Rokossovsky



op officers of the Soviet Armed
es visit the Lenin Mausoleum





M V. Frunze, People's Commissar for Army and Navy



A military parade

L to r A I Yegorov, I E Yakir, K Ye Voroshilov, S M Budenny, at military exercises

The Red Army went from strength to strength

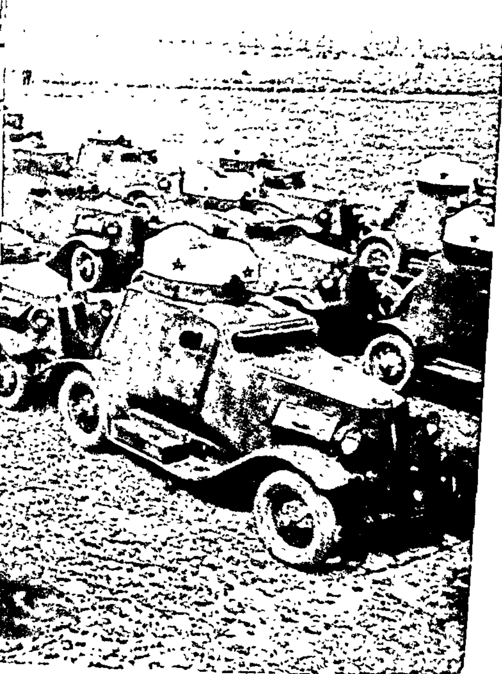
L. to r.: Divisional Commander F. I. Kuznetsov, Deputy Commander of the Byelorussian Military District, M. P Kovalev, Commander of the Byelorussian Military District, and Georgi Zhukov, Deputy District Commander for the Cavalry, 1939



Military exercises, combat training







Command post of the 1st Army Group





The height is taken

H. Choibalsan, Commander-in-Chief of the Mongolian Armed Forces, and Georgi Zhukov, Commander of the 1st Army Group



I. I. Fedyuninsky, Commander of the 24th Motorized Regiment





A group of Soviet fliers Hero of the Soviet Union Victor Rakhov is second from right



In 1942 the Presidium of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party's Central Committee discusses aid to the fraternal Soviet people. L. to r.. Y Tsedenbal, H Choibalsan, Presidium Chairman of the Little Khural G. Bumtsend, and MPRP Central Committee secretaries Ch. Surenjav and S. Yanjimaa (Sukhe-Bator's wife)

personnel and political workers had been doing good work. Commander of the 23rd Cavalry Regiment was L. N. Sakovich. This was a man of unimpeachable honesty, a self-disciplined man deeply loyal to the Communist Party, and a brave soldier. He laid down his life on May 27, 1942 in the Kharkov Operation, in command of the 28th Cavalry Division.

Commander of the 4th Mechanized Regiment was V. V. Novikov who in the war was in command of a mechanized corps, receiving mention more than once in the orders of the Supreme Commander. A veteran of the First Mounted Army, he was for some time operations chief of the 4th Cavalry Division. His commissar in the 4th Mechanized Regiment was A. S. Zinchenko, also a veteran of the First Mounted Army, who had been with it ever since it was formed. In the past war he served as commissar at a number of major front-line hospitals.

In this regiment there grew up many fine commanders and political workers who later held high office at the General Staff, in the central divisions of the Defence Ministry and with the troops. Factory hands or peasants before, they became prominent military experts, senior officers and generals.

Since mechanized units, especially at corps level, played an outstanding role in the Great Patriotic War, while the formation of mechanized army corps did not go at all smoothly before the war, I would like to say a few words about the history of mechanized corps to show that the Soviet army had pioneered this branch of the service.

In 1929, the USSR Revolutionary Military Council took a decision on the basis of a report by Triandafillov), which said: "In view of the fact that armoured forces are a new type of weapon which has not been studied sufficiently from the point of view of its tactical employment (independently and in conjunction with infantry and cavalry) and the best forms of its organization, it is necessary to form a permanent experimental mechanized unit in 1929-1930".

An experimental mechanized regiment was formed accordingly in the same year. In 1929, it took part in the army exercises in our Byelorussian Military District which were conducted by Voroshilov, Shaposhnikov, and Triandafillov.

In 1930, the regiment was made a mechanized brigade which immediately took part in military district exercises. In 1932, we

formed the world's first mechanized corps consisting of two mechanized and one rifle-and-machine-gun brigades and an anti-aircraft battalion. It had over 500 tanks and over 200 other armoured vehicles. By 1936, we had four mechanized corps, six separate mechanized brigades, six separate tank regiments, 15 mechanized regiments as part of cavalry divisions, and over 80 tanks battalions and companies as part of rifle divisions.

The activation and practical testing of the first mechanized formations provided good grounds for developing the theory of broad employment of mechanized troops.

We started inspection of the 4th Mechanized Regiment by alerting the men. Its command personnel had not expected this, of course, as the regiment had only just completed the move from the Leningrad Military District. As a beginning, we explained to the unit commanders that the main thing for a mechanized regiment was to deploy the unit at the double, to handle the new armour expertly, and to master the special art of firing from tanks. As could have been expected, the alert, which happened to fall on a rainy night, disclosed many failings, particularly in driving tanks on unfamiliar terrain and in gunnery.

During on-the-spot inspections I became thoroughly acquainted with the divisional HQ and the unit commanders and political workers. In the divisional headquarters and in the political department, too, there were quite a few shortcomings in practical administration. Control of combat training, for example, was inadequate: commanders were not exacting enough in having all orders carried out promptly. Analysis, generalization and dissemination of progressive combat-training know-how was poorly organised. As a result each unit "stewed in its own juice", there were cases when a unit was "discovering" something, some improved method of training, say, that some other unit had long since been using.

Divisional chief of staff was A. I. Vertogradsky, a knowledgeable military expert who before the Revolution had been an officer in the tsarist army. Heading the political department was a most capable political officer, N. A. Yung. Soon he was promoted to the post of deputy for political affairs of the commander of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, and left for Minsk.

After summing up the results of the inspection with the divisional command we decided for a start to convene a meeting of Party activists and discuss all merits and faults in the life of division. Thereupon we would call a broad conference of the entire command personnel, to which unit NCOs would also be invited for the role they played in organizing all affairs was exceptionally great.

The meeting of Party activists was a success. Speakers demonstrated intolerance of shortcomings, and rebuffed those who tried to explain away the lax discipline and the poor standard of training as being due to objective reasons.

It was clear that the general backsliding in the division was traceable to poor political work and combat training — which had been almost completely suspended as everything had been concentrated on construction. A balanced system of combat training had to be reintroduced at once and full-scale Party political work restarted. As for the building and other day-to-day business, these matters were to be dealt with on days specially set aside for this in the plan. Furthermore, we hoped to get a much larger measure of assistance from the Military District Command than thus far.

The opinion of the Party meeting and the proposals made by the divisional command were well received and supported by the conference of the command personnel and political workers.

In the sphere of combat training we intended to concentrate on methodical training of all echelons of the command personnel. As for tactical training, we undertook to give a series of demonstration exercises. The 21st Regiment was asked to provide such a demonstration in fire training, while the 19th Regiment and personally F. Ya. Kostenko, a fine horseman, were asked to give equestrian demonstrations. V. V. Kryukov undertook to provide demonstrations in marching drill and physical training. The 23rd Regiment was ordered to prepare and hold briefings on NCO training, while the 4th Mounted Artillery and 4th mechanized regiments were instructed to hold exercises in the coordination of artillery and armour with cavalry in offensive operations.

Much methodical and organizational work lay ahead, for good results could be expected only if the exercises were of a superior standard and would impress the audience.

In tactical training we concentrated on the personal training of the medium and senior echelons of the command personnel. Past experience and my many years in the army had convinced me that only tactically well-grounded commanders were capable of training combatworthy units in peacetime, and of winning battles in wartime with minimum losses.

I must once more emphasize that I personally had always considered tactical training the most important aspect of combat training generally, and have maintained this approach throughout all my many years in the army, from private to Minister for Defence.

The division allotted most of its training time to field exercises, placing the emphasis on the organization and conduct of combat in complicated conditions. Lightning marches to the forming-up place and the acute situations that cropped up greatly benefited the command personnel. We saw to it that the commanders and political workers should learn to organize and direct units in battle — as without this it is impossible to defeat the enemy in the highly dynamic modern combat.

At that time the cavalry was the most mobile arm of the ground forces. It was intended for quick flanking and enveloping movements and thrusts into the enemy's flanks and rear. In meeting engagements it had to be capable of rapid deployment and of opening fire with all speed, of rushing its main forces to assault positions, and of pursuing the retreating enemy.

Reinforcement of cavalry with armour and the equipment of mounted artillery regiments with howitzers provided possibilities not only for crushing enemy resistance, but also for successfully fighting offensive and defensive operations.

To be sure, the introduction and employment of new technical facilities did not always go smoothly owing to the low educational level of many soldiers and commanders, numerous breakdowns and technical snags; not all the men realized the need for technical knowledge, and there was a shortage of specialists. Old arms of the service had to be reorganized, new formations had to be activated, infantry and cavalry commanders had to be retrained into fliers and tankmen, while all the time maintaining combat readiness to repulse possible aggression. The organization of the troops was being changed along with this.

On the other hand, the new equipment attracted the men with its promise of new possibilities, and evoked interest among the mass of servicemen. Military-technical knowledge was being broadly popularized in the press, over the radio, and through the cinema. Under the guidance of Party organizations, commanders and men studied in countless military-technical circles. Nearly 80 per cent of the personnel of our military district attended such circles in 1932, while their total number for the army and navy was about 5,000. Servicemen heard lectures and reports on military-technical subjects and participated in contests for the best knowledge of equipment and weapons.

Everywhere in the units Komsomol members set up stands and photographic displays popularizing technical knowledge. They organized meetings to discuss the best maintenance methods of the latest military-technical books, set up exhibitions of equipment and launched a mass drive for the title of excellent marksman.

With the help of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League and the various voluntary defence societies, young people of conscription age were quickly learning the use of military equipment. In 1934 and 1935 over one and a half million young men and women passed tests in knowledge of the internal combustion engine, and one million in anti-aircraft and chemical defence.

In short, promotion of the Party's call to learn all things technical was the main concern of Party, trade union and Komsomol organizations in the army, and of commanders and political workers. Commanders and men learned to use the equipment and were often able to make improvements in it. In 1933, over 4,000 such improvements were made in our military district alone: this activity was naturally encouraged in every way.

We considered it a key task to teach command and staff personnel to direct operations in conditions of surprise meeting engagements. This ruled out orders and instructions in writing or by telephone and other means of wire communication. It was high time to switch to operational command by radio and a system of laconic battle orders, or to "control from the saddle" as cavalrymen were fond of saying in those days.

In the tactical training of all echelons of divisional and regi-

mental command personnel, we tried to teach them the skill of camouflaging troop movements, so as to ensure that strikes should take the enemy by surprise.

I still remember an interesting bilateral war game we held in 1933. The defender was Muzychenko's reinforced 21st Regiment, and was given two days to build up a defence line over the entire tactical depth. The 20th Regiment, which was the attacking side, had no inkling of the pending exercise or of the field defences the 21st Regiment was organizing. It was alerted suddenly.

In the jumping-off area, the 20th was joined by reinforcing units: a tank squadron and a howitzer battalion. Here the regimental command was filled in on the tactical situation, which called for immediate action: the 20th was required to make a 46-kilometre forced march as the forward unit of the division and to capture the bridgehead on which the 21st Regiment had dug in.

Towards sunset the advance guard of the 20th Cavalry Regiment engaged the combat outposts of the 21st. Since the 20th had not managed to reconnoitre "enemy" defences before nightfall, its commander V. V. Kryukov resolved to do this overnight and attack at dawn. Indeed, this was the only possible decision.

Past experience shows that the outcome of a battle depends, in the final analysis, on how well — to the point, strictly and attentively — the CO and his staff organize the attack. Of paramount importance in this intricate effort is intelligence. When one is aware of enemy dispositions, strength and resources, and of the specific features of enemy-held terrain, one can forecast the enemy reaction unerringly.

I know from my own experience how important thorough reconnaissance is. Especially if the attack is due at dawn, for during the night the enemy may easily change his dispositions under cover of darkness. All the more is reconnaissance necessary when one faces a battlewise adversary.

Kryukov, commander of the 20th Regiment, naturally knew all that in theory, but committed an impermissible error and overlooked the fact that the "enemy", too, had a mission to perform, that of checking the "enemy's" breakthrough, and of destroying him if possible.

Muzychenko, commander of the 21st Cavalry Regiment, decided, first, before darkness set in to repulse "enemy" breakthrough attempts with fire from both his forward line of defence and his artillery, thus preventing the "enemy" from wedging into his front-line position. Second, under cover of the din of battle and in complete secrecy, he planned, after darkness set in, to withdraw to his preconceived and accordingly prepared second line of defence. Third, he decided to withdraw his men from the first trench of his regiment's front line just before dawn, so that the "enemy" would not discover his manoeuvre, leaving reconnaissance patrols to report on the "enemy's" movements.

As soon as darkness set in, the commander of the 20th Regiment dispatched reinforced reconnaissance patrols to the "enemy's" forward line of defence. They were met with fire, took cover in front of the barbed wire and began studying the situation. Throughout the night the commander of the 20th received regular reports that the "enemy" still held the first trench and was even trying to capture prisoners. Kryukov was sure the "enemy" had dug in and would defend his positions.

At daybreak, after a shelling, the regimental commander, anticipating an easy victory, fired flares to start the attack. The shelling was intensified, and a vigorous assault launched. Tanks rolled across the first line trenches at high speed and broke into the second line. The first trench was taken! Then, all of a sudden, the tanks halted.

"Comrade Divisional Commander," the commander of the 20th Regiment addressed the superviser of the exercises, "permit me to go and see for myself why the attacking lines have halted."

He was given permission and in the second line of trenches found Bush, commander of the 2nd Squadron, of whom he inquired why they had halted.

"We're wondering with the tank squadron commander what to do next."

"Crush the 'enemy', that's what!" Kryukov cried.

"But there is no 'enemy' here!"

Kyukov was startled: "Where has he got to? All night reconnaissance reported that the 'enemy' had dug in."

A mediator tankman told the regimental commander a note had been found that may explain matters.

The regimental commander took the note and read: "Greetings! You can whistle for us. Next time keep your eyes peeled!"

One should have seen the consternation written on every face, the awkwardness felt over the successful ruse of the 21st Regiment, which had made the attacker waste his ammunition. Furthermore, they had not the faintest idea of the "enemy's" whereabouts.

"Muzychenko has pulled one over on you," Kostenko, the senior mediator attached to the 20th Regiment, observed caustically.

"Could be worse," Kryukov said as he examined his map and peered at the terrain up in front. At this very moment, as if confirming his words, the mediators noted an artillery strike at the halted line of the 20th Regiment.

That was the last straw.

The exercise was analyzed in full detail. Special note was made of the blunders committed by the 20th Regiment which had been guilty of inexcusable passiveness in reconnoitering the "enemy". The operations of the 21st Regiment, on the other hand, were commended as a model for deceptive moves.

All participants in this exercise retained lasting memories of it, and it was repeated in various modifications time and again.

Special heed was paid in troop training to the ability to determine aims and tasks in intricate conditions. What did we do? I usually kept the point of the exercise under my hat. The regiment in training was alerted and assigned a concentration area. There its command was filled in on the tactical situation and given its battle orders that required manoeuvring across hard to cross marshy or wooded terrain. It needed much clearing and laying of roads and crossings from material at hand. As a rule, no engineer support was given, so as to accustom all command echelons to drawing upon their own resources.

Physically, these exercises were most gruelling. Sometimes the men would be literally on their last legs, going without sleep and proper meals for several days running. But how happy they were when their unit coped with some formidable assignment and reached the set goal! Next time finding them-

selves in grim conditions, they knew they would achieve their mission. In this way, the command personnel and the men acquired skills that enabled them to creditably fulfil every assignment.

The comradely get-togethers which the political workers arranged after such exercises helped to instill valuable moral qualities in the commanders and men. The participants in the field exercises aired their views, discussed faults, and held up to good-humoured ridicule all who had added to the difficulties by negligence or indifference, or who had thrown in the towel in the face of obstacles.

Thanks to the efforts of all the men in the division, the construction work was completed in 1935. All units were now well quartered and had good training facilities. The complement of horses was also much better.

The division had made good headway in every aspect of political and combat training. Discipline was good, as was the general organizational set-up of the various units.

The year 1935 abounded in happy events. In the first place, at inspection reviews, all of the units were commended, even in so difficult an aspect of cavalry training as firing. In the *second place, the division was awarded the highest governmental* distinction — the Order of Lenin — for good progress in overall combat training.

A number of officers, NCOs and privates were likewise decorated. I myself, as commander of the division, received the Order of Lenin. I was deeply moved, and wanted to do more to raise morale and the standard of training to a still higher level.

That year is remembered by us military men because the Party took another measure to raise the authority of the commanding personnel — it introduced personal military ranks. The first Marshals of the Soviet Union were V. K. Blücher, S. M. Budenny, K. Ye. Voroshilov, A. I. Yegorov, and M. N. Tukhachevsky.

A big event for us was Budenny's visit to our division. He came to inspect us and to see the progress we were making, especially in horsemanship, drill and tactical training. He rated all exercises highly which reaffirmed the fine standard of training reached.

For the ceremony at which the division was to receive the Order of Lenin the cavalry were drawn up in parade formation on one of the city squares. The men were in high spirits. On the flanks of each of the units the banners under which our veterans had fought the whiteguards and Polish gentry, waved in the breeze.

The general's march was played, the ceremonial report was given and a solemn hush descended as Budenny mounted the platform. He signalled to me and my two assistants to ride up with the divisional colours. He pinned the Order of Lenin to them, and lifting them high we galloped past the ranks.

There were cheers and an artillery salvo thundered. This expressed the men's hearty gratitude to the Party and Government for this high reward in peacetime military training.

We could see that Budenny was deeply moved, as he prepared to address the division. Small wonder, too, since this division which he himself had reared, was now getting the country's highest distinction. I must note that our cavalrymen, especially those who had gone through the Civil War with him, looked up to Budenny with great respect.

Budenny said many warm words to us. Then I spoke on behalf of the men, asking Budenny to tell the Party Central Committee and the Government that our 4th Division would cherish and multiply its martial traditions and would always be prepared to fulfil any assignment the country may have for it.

The day wound up with a ceremonial march-past of the entire division. After the parade I gave a banquet at which Budenny and veterans of the First Mounted Army reminisced about the Civil War and those plucky comrades who had not lived to see the present. The best raconteur was Vasily Novikov, the commanding officer of the 4th Mechanized Regiment, whose amazing memory had retained even the slightest details of army life.

Subsequently, while I was still in command of the 4th Division, Budenny visited us another three times, each visit occasioning the entire personnel the greatest delight. I must say that Budenny certainly knew how to talk with the commanders and men. Though, of course, he did not conduct any exercises or games in person, no one thought any the worse of him for that.

We were also visited several times by I. P. Uborevich, Commander of the Byelorussian Military District. He was a fine Soviet general who had mastered tactics and strategy to his finger tips. He would turn up when least expected and each time he came the men would be alerted and at the end there would be tactical exercises or commanders' drill.

He first visited us in 1934, telling me that he had come to see how the division was faring. I said I was very happy to see him, though frankly speaking, I felt excited.

"I'll give you four hours," he said, "to take the 21st Regiment out for field exercises to show what progress the division has made." He added: "I'm giving you a free hand. I will be expecting your aide at the HQ of the 4th Rifle Division."

"It's too little time to organize a tactical exercise properly," I tried to object. "There'll not be enough time even to brief the mediators or designate the "enemy"".

"I agree," Uborevich said. "But anything can happen in the army."

I realized that remonstrance was pointless, and action was called for. I telephoned Muzychenko, commander of the 21st Cavalry Regiment, and gave him the passwords for the training lert and the starting position. I also dictated to him a short actical assignment. While the assignment was being typed, he divisional chief of staff and his assistants quickly prepared operations maps and then took them personally to the commanding officer of the 21st Regiment. By the appointed hour everything was ready.

Uborevich and the aide I had sent for him arrived at the starting position four hours later on the dot.

He greeted Muzychenko and asked him for a summary of the situation and what he intended doing about it. Muzychenko did this very capably and by the smile on Uborevich's face I could see that he was satisfied with the beginning of the exercise.

"Well, boots and saddles," he said. "Let's see the regiment in action."

The exercise took five hours. In this time Uborevich had a look at all the detachments of the regiment, which operated as the "divisional vanguard." He did more than 80 kilometres on horseback and, evidently tired, ordered the exercise to end.

After an analysis which I gave straight on horseback in front of the lined up regiment, Uborevich made a brief speech of thanks. Parting with the divisional staff, he said:

"Your training is quite on a par with modern standards. I wish you all the best. I cannot stay, since I am in a hurry to get to the frontier, but I promise to call on you before the manoeuvres."

We were pleased with the results of the exercise and, frankly speaking, were glad that Uborevich had no more time to stay with us.

In 1935, the 4th Cavalry Division was transferred from the 3rd Cavalry Corps to the 6th Cossack Corps, which was put under the command of E. I. Goryachev. In April 1936, it was renamed the 4th Don Cossack Division, and all its commanders and men changed into Cossack uniforms.

I have had occasion to take part in many district manoeuvres. The big district manoeuvres were of particular value for the experience I gained in the tactical direction of operations You've got to hand it to Uborevich, his chief of staff B. I. Bobrov, his combat training department chief N. A. Shumovich, and his entire staff generally. They were most expert in bringing home the lesson of the manoeuvres they organized, in conducting them, and then analyzing the results.

I remember the 1936 manoeuvres very well — especially the forcing of the Berezina, the river on which Napoleon lost the remnants of his army retreating from Russia in 1812.

We knew that People's Commissar for Defence Voroshilov and other military leaders attended, and it was only natural for every unit and formation to anticipate a personal visit from Voroshilov. We of the 4th Cossack Division took it for granted that he would come to see us. But we did not know when. We hoped he would come while the weather still held and we would all look spruce and neat. Unfortunately, as is often the case in autumn, rainy weather set in.

Having completed deployment of divisional units in the vicinity of the river crossing — where they were well concealed in the forests four or five kilometres away from the river — we summoned the commanders to the command post to verbally instruct them on tactical coordination with neighbouring units after forcing the river. The maps were barely spread out when

a string of cars drove up. Voroshilov, Shaposhnikov and Uborevich alighted from the first car. I reported to Voroshilov, briefly noting that the 4th Division was prepared to force the river and that the unit commanders had been summoned for a final briefing.

"Fine," Voroshilov said. "We'll listen in."

Voroshilov wanted to know how our BT-5 tanks would force the river under their own power if they submerged. After a circumstantial report by the commander of the mechanized regiment, Voroshilov addressed commanders and commissars he had known from the First Mounted Army.

"How greatly has our cavalry changed!" he exclaimed. "During the Civil War all that Budenny and I had in our Mounted Army were a few primitive armoured cars. Today, every cavalry division has a regiment of fine tanks that can take a formidable river under their own power. What, old buddy, do you think about our tanks?" Voroshilov turned to Kostenko. "Will they let us down? Or is a horse more dependable?"

"No," Kostenko said, "though it's too early to give up horse, sabre and lance, they can still do good service, we are paying great heed to tanks as a new mobile arm of our troops."

"And what does your commissar think?" Voroshilov asked of Zinchenko, whom he also knew from First Mounted Army days.

"In my opinion Kostenko's right," Zinchenko said, adding, "I would certainly be a poor, in fact an absolutely inefficient, commissar of a mechanized regiment, if I questioned the great future of armour. I think we must build up our mechanized forces on a greater scale, and especially tank formations, of which we have too few."

"Very good," Voroshilov said. Then, addressing those who accompanied him, he said: "Let's not take up any more of the division's time. All the best, we'll get together again and talk."

We understood that Voroshilov would personally observe the forcing of the river, as the motorcade headed for the scene of our future action. After half an hour of artillery shelling, our advance units approached the river bank along a broad front. A low-flying aircraft put out a smokescreen, concealing the advance landing party from the "enemy". As the smoke began to clear, the advance force had already

gained a foothold on the opposite bank. Here and there shouts of "hurrah", the staccato of rifle and machine-gun fire, and artillery firing were heard. And when the smoke lifted completely, we got a clear view of 15 tanks from the mechanized regiment roaring up the "enemy" bank, their guns firing, and speeding to support the units continuing the assault from the captured bridgehead. Soon the entire division was on the other bank and, driving the "enemy" before it, advanced with fair success.

At the analysis, Voroshilov praised the good organization of the river crossing and the tankmen's daring to ford so deep a river as the Berezina under their own power.

We passed down the commendation at regimental assemblies. The men would not disperse for a long time, and jubilantly discussed the highlights of the exercise.

A parade was held next morning. The weather was glorious, the sunshine seeming to warm our hearts in a special way. The troops that had taken part in the district manoeuvres were lined up, and waited for the order to come to attention and greet the People's Commissar for Defence.

It seemed to me as if the command personnel of my 4th Don Cossack Division were more excited than the rest. I looked again and saw calm and confident faces. In the midst of these reflections, I heard the command "Attention, eyes right," as the People's Commissar for Defense rode up.

Uborevich, the District Commander, briefly reported and Voroshilov galloped off to inspect the troops. First he went to the infantry. The divisional band struck up the general's march. Astride a lively chestnut Voroshilov rode up to our division checking his mount in front of the 19th Manych Regiment, the outfit he had led more than once into battle against whiteguard and white Polish troops. He greeted the men with special warmth as he glanced at the ranks.

After reviewing the 4th Division Voroshilov galloped off to inspect the 6th Chongar Cossack Division which had also covered itself with glory during the Civil War. It had fought well shoulder to shoulder with our own division under the colours of the First Mounted Army.

Following this, Voroshilov ascended the platform to deliver a speech in which he briefly dwelt on the policies and measures

adopted by the Party in socialist construction, referred to the international situation, emphasized the need for stronger defences, and congratulated the troops on the successful autumn manoeuvres. The band then struck up, and the infantry trooped by. It was followed by the cavalry.

At parades, as a rule, the cavalry kept to a trot. However, this time we got Uborevich to agree to a canter. However, it so happened that passing the reviewing stand the cavalry broke into a fast gallop, while the column of machine-gun carriages which followed the horsemen dashed by in full career. Corps Commander S. K. Timoshenko was worried and shot glances at me, but there was nothing at all that I could do at that point. The machine-gun carriages whizzed by like arrows from a bow. We were afraid that a wheel might come off as this sometimes happened at parades even in Moscow. I stole a look at Voroshilov and was relieved to see that his face was wreathed in smiles as he waved in greeting to the division's daredevil machine-gunners.

The 4th Don Cossack Division participated in all district manoeuvres down the years. It was invariably well prepared and always earned praise from the higher command.

I want to describe one of the exercises we had shortly before the manoeuvres. Conducted in the vicinity of Slutsk under Uborevich and his deputy, Timoshenko, the exercise was a meeting engagement between a rifle division and a cavalry division.

In those days a rifle division had already become a well-equipped combat formation. While ten years earlier it had 12,800 men, 54 artillery pieces, 189 heavy and 81 light machine guns and not a single tank or anti-aircraft weapon; a rifle division in 1935 had about the same strength plus 57 tanks, up to 100 artillery pieces, 180 heavy and over 350 light machine guns and 18 anti-aircraft machine guns.

The exercise began early on a September morning. The weather was lovely, the autumn air invigorating, and the men were in good spirits. The tactical assignment had been given the night before and throughout the night the units prepared for the assault. To start with, they were to capture and pass a narrow defile.

The manoeuvre was of major importance, especially for

the forward units as beyond a stretch of swamp there lay a tactically significant range of heights providing a clear view of the surrounding terrain. The terrain was favourable for dispersal along a wide front, which is of no small significance in meeting engagements. We decided to put in the van elements of the 4th Mechanized Regiment, namely: light tanks, armoured cars, motorized infantry and aritllery. This mobile force would quckly capture and pass the defile and emerge at key points, entering as soon as possible into contact with the "enemy".

Where visibility was poor, cavalry patrols fanned out along the flanks. As soon as the advance force radioed that the defile had been passed and that the front-line units had reached the front line, we radioed to the main forces at once to start moving in echelons through the defile to the initial assault positions and then capture the main line.

Two hours later the main forces had crossed the swamps and had assumed jump-off positions. The divisional headquarters and command post were with the main force by that time. Our advance guard and its scouts reported that a column of infantry consisting of two regiments with artillery support and another column consisting of one rifle regiment reinforced with artillery were advancing towards us. The "enemy's" reconnaissance patrols were some 6 to 8 kilometres ahead of their advance guard. There were no spotter aircraft overhead, and we were therefore sure the "enemy" had not yet discovered our units on the march.

Quite unexpectedly as was their habit, Army Commander Uborevich and Timoshenko drove up.

"What intelligence have you on the 'enemy' and where are your forces?" Uborevich asked.

I pointed out on my map where the "enemy" forces were deployed and in what group my division was operating. I also announced the decision I had taken. Uborevich asked me to note down on his map where I planned to engage the "enemy" and where the regiments would strike.

"This is, of course, tentative, providing there is no serious change in the situation," I said.

From Timoshenko's smile I saw that I had hit the bull's eye. This lent me more confidence.

"How will you get your battle orders through to the regiments and where will you be yourself when the forces come into contact and engage?" Uborevich inquired.

I said: "Operations Chief Arkhipov will go to the first column of the 20th Regiment which is to pin the "enemy's" rifle regiments. The 19th Regiment supported by an artillery battalion and a tank squadron will attack the main 'enemy' force frontally. The battle orders will be relayed there by my deputy, Brigade Commander Dreier. I myself will relay orders to the main force, which is to outflank the 'enemy' grouping and attack from the rear. I shall be with them until the engagement is over. Now, as my delegates leave, brief orders will be radioed to their units."

Uborevich wished us all the best, and getting into the car with Timoshenko, drove off in the direction of the "enemy".

As we had anticipated, the 19th and 20th Cavalry regiments attacked the "enemy" frontally in a heavy action, thus helping our main force to get its bearings.

Our "enemy" was most careless. No one detected our main force, which had outflanked him and had massed for an assault in the rear. Stopping to take a view from one of the heights, we saw that one of the "enemy's" rifle regiments, fronting westwards, had engaged our 19th Cavalry Regiment which had taken up excellent firing positions and another was making an enveloping movement across ploughland, apparantly to strike at the flank of the 19th Regiment which the "enemy" had taken for our main force.

Meanwhile, our tanks rolled out of the thickets in assault formation, followed by the main force. The banks and artillery opened up devastating fire, then came a tumultuous "hurrah" from thousands of throats. It was impossible to make out any further what was going on — as is often the case in a meeting engagement.

What had really happened and which side had manoeuvred better than the other, delivering the better blow, we learned during the analysis made by Uborevich right there in the field.

After noting a number of serious faults in the behaviour of the 4th Rifle Division, Uborevich said the 4th Cavalry Division had made a good impression.

We cavalrymen were delighted with this praise but, on the other hand, felt disturbed over the failure of the 4th Rifle Division, with which we were friends as we were in one and the same garrison.

During the manoeuvres the command of the 4th Rifle Division again had bad luck. In the neighbourhood of Trostyanets, not far from Minsk, it was one of several divisions that were again encircled. But that was not all. It did very badly in trying to break out of the encirclement. Again, as during the Slutsk exercise, it had for its main "opponent" my 4th Cavalry Division.

Breaking out of an encirclement is probably the most difficult and complicated of all operations. To breach the enemy line quickly, the command personnel must necessarily display great skill, fortitude and organization, and control the troops with special accuracy.

To be sure of success in such a difficult operation, one must mass the troops in the breakthrough sector in great secrecy, mount a powerful artillery and air strike, deliver a swift blow at enemy positions and put out smokescreens to obscure enemy visibility. Unfortunately, the divisional command failed to cope with the job.

The last time Uborevich inspected our division was in 1936. Thanks to the efforts of the entire personnel the division was in a splendid condition. Its political training, discipline, general organization and combat preparedness were given high marks. Uborevich, who usually stinted praise, warmly thanked the men and rewarded them with valuable presents.

In June 1937, Army Commander I. P. Belov was appointed commander of the Byelorussian Military District. He was conversant in operational matters. A. M. Peremytov was his chief of staff, and Army Commissar A. I. Mezis was member of the Military Council.

Today, looking back, I must confess that I. P. Uborevich was the better district commander. No other district commander, indeed, had boosted the tactical training of the commanders and staffs of the formations as effectively as he and his staff did.

I was in command of the division for more than four years, and all this time was preoccupied with one thought only: to make my division the best outfit in the Red Army. Much effort

and energy had gone into raising its standard, into dragging it out of the hole, into teaching the commanding personnel and the staffs the art of modern tactics, and of organizing control of units, and the division as a whole.

I do not venture to claim that we had done everything right. We had made blunders, mistakes and miscalculations, but I can say with a clear conscience that the commanders and political workers could not have done better in those days, and that they did their level best in training the division.

In general, the life of the army in 1929-1936 was tied up above all with the Leninist programme of building socialism. Economic growth and the progress of science and technology enabled the country to supply the army, air force and navy with modern weapons. The organizational structure of the troops was improved. The technical training of the personnel proceeded in full gear. The greater socio-political and ideological unity of the people resulting from the triumph of socialism had a favourable effect on the army's patriotic spirit.

In this and the preceding chapters I have intentionally dwelt on various exercises and manoeuvres. The fact is that mastering the use of new equipment and all the aspects, often quite complex, of the art of warfare was predominant in the army at that time.

The USSR Revolutionary Military Council, the People's Commissariat for Defence and its branches in the military districts, the higher, medium and lower echelons of commanding personnel, the political organs, Party and Komsomol organizations, and soldiers of all arms of the service, persistently and I would say ardently tackled the tasks set by the Party Central Committee and the Defence Minister, mastering the new weapons and the resulting new tactics. Many fliers became real aces, while thousands of men in the ground forces excelled in combat and political training.

To be sure, things did not go equally well everywhere. In some cases the combat training of the troops was not good enough for complicated conditions, control was not as good as it should be in many of the units, and the staffs had not yet learned promptly and efficiently to organize cooperation of various fighting arms in combat. All in all, however, the persistent efforts of the last few years resulted in a definite turn

for the better, with commanders, staffs, and troops gaining command of the art of warfare.

The 1936 autumn manoeuvres conducted in our Byelorussian Military District to check the combat capability of the troops were indicative in that respect. Large formations well stocked with the latest arms took part in the exercises. The commanders and troops on the whole showed their ability to control the battle in cooperation with all fighting arms in rapidly changing conditions. These and many other exercises and manoeuvres testified to the growing might of the Red Army showing that it was becoming a first-rate fighting force.

Following my appointment as commander of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, Ivan Muzychenko, commander of the 21st Cavalry Regiment, was made CO of the division.

Though more than 30 years have passed since then, I still retain the warmest recollections of the command personnel, and the men of the K. Ye. Voroshilov 4th Don Cossack Division

## Chapter 6

# THE 3rd AND 6th CAVALRY CORPS OF THE BYELORUSSIAN MILITARY DISTRICT

*It was 1937.* Twenty years of Soviet power, twenty years of hard struggle and glorious victories, of economic and cultural development, and of successes in all sectors of socialist construction, had proved the greatness of the ideas of the October Revolution.

Much had been done, unbelievably much for so short a time. Before industrializaton the technical standard of our country was four orders below that of Britain, five below that of Germany, and ten below that of the USA. During the first (1929-1932) and the second (1933-1937) five-year plan periods many new industries came into being, while the ferrous and nonferrous metals industry, chemicals, power, and engineering made giant strides forward.

The gross industrial output in 1937 was almost four times that of 1929, and to compare the gross output of engineering and metal-working in 1940 — the last prewar year, to that of 1913, the accretion amounted to 3,400 per cent. Some 9,000 large industrial enterprises were built under the prewar five-year plans, and a new powerful industrial base was created in the east of the country, which proved so eminently useful during the war. For industrial output and the technical standards of the new enterprises the Soviet Union attained first place in Europe and second in the world.

When one talks about this to young people today, one notices no special response to these staggering figures and facts. In a way, that is probably natural: times have changed and standards, too, and people's concerns and interests. Much has been done and is now taken for granted, and the first rungs of the ladder

which we climbed are no longer visible. But to these who are 50 today, and especially to those of us who were born before the Revolution, those figures meant a lot. We studied them, learned them by heart, and were proud of them. Probably because they were part of our life, because our work had gone into them — work that bordered on self-denial, and was always inspired by the belief that the common good depended on you, on how well you worked.

I do not wish to moralize or to complain about modern yout if only because that is too much the fashion today. Since it wa so long ago, I only wish the younger generation would understand with their minds, if not with their hearts as we did, that the high rates of our country's prewar development were vivid testimony of the progressiveness of our system. Historians, philosophers, sociologists and writers will refer to that period again and again to describe and to learn the secrets, the mainsprings behind the rapid progress of our new social system.

And so, we had built a powerful defence potential. But what did our army look like after the technical reconstruction carried out under the prewar five-year plans?

On the whole, it had become an up-to-date army that measured up to the latest standards. For the balance of arms and services, in structure and in technical standard, it matched the armies of the advanced capitalist countries.

Hundreds of munition factories had been built. After the Civil War, as we may recollect, the country had no special factories to turn out tanks, planes, aircraft engines, heavy artillery systems, radio equipment and other types of modern weaponry and equipment. We had started from scratch almost in everything. In view of the strained international situation and the growing likelihood of aggression by imperialist states, the development rates set by the Party for the defence industry under the first and second five-year plans were higher than for all other industries.

Scientists, engineers and designers were set the task of developing arms and equipment that would be as good as, even better, than those of other countries. Large design offices research institutes and laboratories were set up practically for every arm and service. Scores of capable, enthusiastic designers' groups appeared.

Simpler design, lighter weight and higher rate of fire was what designers sought to achieve in small arms. The old 7.62 mm rifle developed by Captain Mosin of the Russian Army was modernized. Serial production was started of S. G. Simonov's automatic rifle (1936 model), the 1938 model carbine, V. A. Degtyarev's light machine gun, and its modifications for tanks, aircraft and anti-aircraft batteries. The first Soviet-made large-calibre machine-gun (by Degtyarev and Shpagin) with excellent combat characteristics, was adopted for service in 1938. In 1939 the army received a new heavy machine gun designed by V. A. Degtyarev. Especially appreciated by the army were Degtyarev's submachine gun using pistol cartridges and especially the new types of submachine gun developed by Shpagin. As many as 174,000 rifles and 41,000 machine guns were being manufactured in the Soviet Union in 1930 and 1931, their output in 1938 registering an increase to 1,175,000 and 77,000 respectively. By the end of the second five-year plan period, the Red Army was ahead of the armies of capitalist countries for the number of light and heavy machine guns, and the number of rounds manufactured per man per minute.

The output of tanks grew rapidly. While 5,000 tanks were turned out during the first five-year plan period, the army had 15,000 different tanks by the end of the second five-year plan period. They were fast and had considerable fire power. Indeed, our probable adversaries had nothing to equal them in this respect in the same class. However, they were not manoeuvrable enough, vulnerable to gunfire, and broke down much too often. Besides, they had petrol engines which made them easily inflammable. The annual output of tanks increased from 740 in 1930-1931 to 2,271 in 1938.

Our preoccupation with tanks caused us to under-rate artillery. Some military leaders even wanted to reduce artillery to universal and semi-universal guns. The Central Committee of the Communist Party pointed out the fallacy of this trend, and mapped out an efficient ratio between gun and howitzer artillery. In late 1937 several large engineering plants were converted to making the latest artillery pieces, while the capacity of already functioning plants was increased. Whereas annual production of artillery pieces in 1930-1931 was 2,000, in 1938 it topped 12,500.

In 1937 a 152-mm gun-howitzer was developed, and the 122-mm gun was modernized. A 122-mm howitzer appeared in 1938. All these, too, were fine weapons. The 1937 model 45-mm anti-tank gun, for instance, could pierce the armour of any tank the capitalist armies had in service at that time.

By early 1939, the artillery in our army increased in number from 17,000 pieces in 1934 to almost 56,000. True, some outdated artillery systems had remained in service too long. Besides, a number of problems concerning the army's supply with artillery could not be solved at the time.

During the second five-year plan period the infantry was given 50-mm mortars. A very capable designer, B. I. Shavyrin, had developed 82-mm and 120-mm mortars long before the war. But it was much later that the army was adequately supplied with mortars.

The technical modernization wholly transformed our air force. The aircraft industry had started mass production of various Soviet types of planes. They included the fast twin-engine SB bomber, the TB-3 heavy bomber, long-range bombers and the I-15 and I-16 high-speed and highly manoeuvrable fighters.

Most of us remember the epic flights of Mikhail Gromov, Valery Chkalov, and Vladimir Kokkinaki in Soviet-made planes. In 1937 our fliers set some 30 world records for range, altitude, and speed. It follows that at the time the technical standard of Soviet aviati[illegible]

[illegible] As for numbers, our aircraft industry lived up to the needs of the time and manufactured nearly 5,500 planes in 1938 as against 860 planes in 1930.

The success of socialist industrialization enabled us to improve considerably the technical standard and combat power of the navy. Some 500 new combat and auxiliary ships of various types were built between 1929 and 1937. The Party's Central Committee took the decision of forming the Pacific Fleet in 1932 and the Northern Flotilla in 1933, and reinforcing the Caspian, Amur, and Dnieper flotillas. Construction of large ocean-going vessels was expanded and serial production launched of submarines of the K, L, Shch, and S classes, and of

torpedo boats, destroyers, light cruisers of the *Kirov*, and heavy cruisers of the *Chapayev*, classes; batteries of coastal artillery were set up, and naval aviation was augmented. The People's Commissariat for Shipbuilding Industry was formed at the very end of 1937 and a plan for building a large fleet during the next five-year plan period was drawn up.

Following the technical re-equipment of the army and navy it was logical and natural to pass over from the mixed territorial-regular army system to the single regular army principle of organising our armed forces. The new weaponry radically changed the methods of warfare and posed specific and intricate problems in the employment of arms and services in combat and in cooperation between them. Brief coaching was clearly insufficient. To learn the new methods consistent and systematic training was required over a lengthy period. The country's increased economic potential made the said transition possible (after all, maintenance of a regular army costs much more).

The Politbureau of the Party's Central Committee and the Government endorsed the proposal of the USSR Revolutionary Military Council on increasing the number of regular divisions and reinforcing the regular core of the remaining territorial divisions. The process saw the Red Army expand numerically. In 1933, it numbered 885,000 officers and men whereas by late 1937 its strength rose to over 1,5 million. The number of regular divisions increased ten times over, and in 1939 the transition to the regular army system was finally completed. Nearly all infantry divisions stationed in the border districts were converted to the regular army principle by the close of 1938.

The passage to the regular cadre principle of composing troops was prompted by yet another reason. We had to be constantly on the alert for the imperialist states had begun building up large regular armies and allocating more and more money to war preparations. Troops formed on the territorial principle could not, in the circumstances, ensure the requisite standard of combat preparedness. In Japan the share of military expenditures in the national budget grew from 43 per cent in 1934 to 70 per cent in 1938; in Italy from 20 to 52 per cent, and in Germany from 21 to 61 per cent, or nearly threefold.

In 1935 fascist Italy invaded Abyssinia; in 1936 Germany and Italy launched an intervention against republican Spain. We

were aware that hostilities were breaking out not simply between countries, but that a global clash was about to start between the forces of reaction and fascism, on one side, and the forces of democracy and socialism, on the other.

Those who are over fifty remember well that the Soviet Union fulfilling its internationalist duty helped the lawful government and the people of Spain with everything it could — arms, provisions, and medicines. Spurred by revolutionary enthusiasm and the spirit of romanticism, Soviet tankmen, pilots, gunners, plain soldiers and prominent generals went to fight in Spain as volunteers.

A great moral uplift was typical for that time in general. To speak of the country as a whole, its economy and culture were developing rapidly, the living standard was rising visibly, and thousands of enthusiastic workers were setting various labour records.

Everyone in the army wanted to learn and to master his job. The morale and political awareness of the troops was excellent. This was a result of the extensive work done by the Party to raise the general cultural level of Red Army men, of the highly ramified training and education system, and the change in the composition of the regulars.

By 1937, illiteracy in the Red Army was wiped out completely. Its ranks abounded in young men who already had a trade — tractor drivers, truck drivers, combine operators, and the like. Tremendous sums were allocated to the promotion of culture and education — over 200 million roubles a year.

Books in army libraries reached the 25 million mark; army personnel subscribed to a variety of periodicals; the number of Red Army clubs, radio relay centres, stationary and mobile film projectors, had grown considerably. The army was actively involved in the country's political life.

Trainees in the 75 military schools were young people with at least seven years of general schooling. The Young Communist League, which had assumed stewardship of the Air Force, sent thousands of fine young men to join it. They made first-class pilots, commanders, and political officers. The educational system was being steadily improved. The curricula were continuously expanded, introducing new theoretical subjects and practicals on combat employment

of new weapons. Special importance was attached to training personnel for the new, fast-growing arms and services, the Central Committee took pertinent decisions on this score. The system of higher military education was being extended. By the end of the second five-year plan period there were as many as 13 military academies, one military college, and five military departments in ordinary schools of higher learning.

The class structure of the army had changed for the better. Of the old regulars only those remained who, tested by time, were loyal to Soviet power, while the new career regulars consisted of workers and peasants with Civil War combat experience or of those who had received a technical and political education at military schools. By 1937, men of worker and peasant background constituted over 70 per cent of the commanding personnel, and every other commander was either a Party or a Komsomol member.

In a word, things were going fine. True, the Soviet Union was building a new life nearly alone, surrounded by hostile capitalist states whose intelligence services spared neither means nor energy to interfere with our effort. Our state and army were quickly gathering strength, the ways of economic and political progress were clearly defined, accepted and approved by all, and the masses were imbued with labour enthusiasm.

All the more unnatural, wholly out of gear with the substance of our system, and contrary to the situation in the counry in 1937, were the unfounded arrests in the armed forces that year in contravention of socialist legality.

Prominent military leaders were arrested, which, naturally, affected the development of our armed forces and their combat preparedness.

In 1937, the People's Commissar for Defence appointed me commander of the 3rd Cavalry Corps of the Byelorussian Military District. But soon I was offered the post of commander of the 6th Cossack Corps, since its commander E. I. Goriachev had been appointed Deputy Commander of the Kiev Special Military District. I accepted the offer gladly. The 6th Cossack Corps was generally in a better state than the 3rd Cavalry Corps, but most important of all, the 4th

Don Cossack Division was in that corps. I had commanded that division for over four years, and quite naturally had a soft spot for it.

An old, battle-tried commander, a First Mounted Army veteran, Y. T. Cherevichenko, took over command of the 3rd Cavalry Corps.

As 6th Corps Commander I concentrated on operational aspects — mostly the combat use of cavalry within a mechanized army. That was then an important and involved problem. As part of a front, a mixed army of two or three tank brigades, one motorized infantry division, and three or four cavalry divisions could, in close cooperation with bomber and fighter aviation, and subsequently with airborne troops, carry out large-scale operations facilitating fulfilment of strategic missions.

It was clear that the future largely belonged to armour and to mechanized units. Hence we gave undivided attention to questions of cavalry-armour cooperation, and to the organization of anti-tank defences in combat and in executing manoeuvres.

In the 3rd and then the 6th Corps, in field exercises and manoeuvres I cooperated with the 21st Detached Tank Brigade under M. I. Potapov or with the 3rd Detached Tank Brigade under V. V. Novikov. Both of them were former mates of mine, and in "combat situations" we understood one another from the word go.

In combat readiness, the 6th Cossack Corps was far better than any other unit. In addition to the 4th Cossack Division, the 6th Chongar Division was also well prepared, especially in horsemanship, use of firearms, and tactics. Credit for this goes to the former Divisional Commander L. Weiner who spared no effort in raising the division's level of combat readiness. It was these combatworthy divisions that had made up the core of the First Mounted Army.

The 29th Cavalry Division quartered in Osipovichi and commanded by Brigade Commander K. V. Pavlovsky, who by his cast of mind and in temperament was no cavalryman, did not look so good. His general level of training, too, as compared with other commanders, was a bit lower.

In the autumn of 1937 district field exercises were held

in the Byelorussian Military District, attended by generals and officers of the German General Staff as guests. The manoeuvres were observed by People's Commissar for Defence Voroshilov and Chief of General Staff Shaposhnikov.

New commanders came to the district, some of them insufficiently experienced or knowledgeable. They had a lot to learn before they could become good military leaders and skilled educators.

I cannot but recall Ivan Kutyakov, an old friend of mine. I had known him for over twenty years and always admired his strong will and military talent. He had been a soldier in the tsarist army. His prestige among the men of his regiment had been so great that they elected him regimental commander in the first days of the Revolution. It was a great honour to be elected by front-line soldiers — one had to be a model for the others, to have a clear head and a warm heart, to know one's men, know what they thought and what they wanted, and to be fond of them.

During the Civil War Kutyakov was in command of an infantry brigade of the 25th Chapayev Division. After the death of Divisional Commander Vasily Ivanovich Chapayev, Kutyakov was put in command of the division. For successful operations against the whiteguards he was awarded three orders of the Red Banner and an order of the Red Banner of the Khorezm Republic and presented prize arms. In 1937 Kutyakov was appointed Deputy Commander of the Volga Military District.

As commander of the 6th Corps I worked assiduously on operational and strategic questions, because I felt that I had still to cover a lot of ground in that field. I was aware that the modern corps commander had to be a most knowledgeable man, and devoted much effort to mastering military science.

Reading war chronicles, classical works on the art of war, and various memoirs, I tried to draw conclusions as to the nature of operations and battles in modern warfare. I especially profited from personally working out operational and tactical assignment to be used in divisional and corps war games for commanders, exercises for staffs, for troops, etc.

After each such exercise I felt that I had gathered a little more knowledge and experience, which was quite necessary

not only for my own improvement but also for the upgradi of young commanders under me. I felt rewarded when class or exercises with a unit, a staff or a group of officers were c practical use to them. I thought this was the greatest re ward for one's labours. In my opinion, if after classes nobody has learned anything new, if nobody has been able to gain anything from the experience of his commander, it is the commander who is to blame, because it is sure proof of his incompetence. I would not conceal the fact that there were a good many commanders whose knowledge was hardly greater than that of their men.

While studying military problems thoroughly and consistently, step by step, both in theory and practice, I am sorry to say I failed to get systematic knowledge in Marxist-Leninist theory.

This was true of many other commanders in those days. Yet the Party was doing everything to raise the ideologica level of the Red Army command personnel. All higher school had a rather closely-packed set of Marxist-Leninist disciplines, but evidently much greater efforts were required of us to attain the desired level of knowledge. Not many of us were lucky enough in our time to attend the courses at the Tolmachyov Military Political Academy.

I realized it was necessary for me, a corps commander, to study Party and political problems in all seriousness, and I often sat up nights reading the classics of Marxism-Leninism. It was by no means an easy task, especially studying Karl Marx's *Capital* and Lenin's philosophical works. However, my perseverence paid off. Later I was glad that I had not given in to difficulties, that I had enough drive to carry on. For it helped me get my bearings in matters related to the organization of our armed forces, and also in the home and foreign policy of the Party.

While studying Leninist strategy and tactics, I insisted that my subordinates do the same, because I realized that without it one could not command, train and educate the troops well, or, if necessary, lead them into battle.

In 1938, I. P. Belov and A. M. Peremytov were recalled to Moscow. M. P. Kovalev was appointed Commander of the Byelorussian Military District. I knew him from the Civil War

days. He was appointed District Commander by way of promotion from the post of deputy commander of a military district. He was a most warm-hearted man, not badly versed in operational and strategic matters, but more att home with theoretical and practical aspects of tactics.

Corps Commander M. A. Purkayev was appointed his Chief of Staff. Purkayev acquitted himself most commendably during the Great Patriotic War.

Towards the end of 1938 commanders of the District formations were summoned to a conference to sum up the results of combat training and to discuss future plans.

We heard two speakers — Kovalev, Commander of the Military District, and Susaikov, member of the Military Council. Kovalev's speech was well received. He knew what he was talking about and spoke with dignity, but we felt that he was no match to Uborevich. It was obvious that he had a lot to learn before he could become a full-fledged commander of a district as large as the Byelorussian Military District was then.

The conference ended with general instructions from the Military Council. It was quite different before, under I. P. Uborevich: new military equipment was then shown during conferences, experimental demonstrative exercises of ground and air forces and operational war games were conducted, and so on.

On the whole, however, in 1938 combat training proceeded normally, and by the end of the year the 6th Cossack Corps had something to show for it.

At the end of 1938 I was offered the post of Deputy Commander of the Byelorussian Military District in charge of cavalry. F. I. Kuznetsov was First Depity Commander (it was the Kuznetsov who in the initial period of the war was in command of the North-Western Front). I was to take the place of I. R. Apanasenko who was being transferred to the Kiev Military District as deputy commander.

In peacetime my duties were to direct the control training of the district cavalry units and of detached tank brigades which were to act jointly with the cavalry under the operational plan. If war broke out, I would assume command of a force of cavalry and mechanized units consisting of four or five cavalry divisions, three or four detached tank brigades and other augmentation units.

I did not want to leave the corps — I had grown accustomed to it. But the prospect of having larger operational scope looked attractive, and I gave my consent. My place in the 6th Cossack Corps was taken by A. I. Yeremenko.

I said good-bye to the corps and divisional commanders and political workers, and left for Smolensk where the Byelorussian Military District Headquarters was stationed. There I was most cordially welcomed by the District Commander M. P. Kovalev.

My service in the 3rd Cavalry and 6th Cossack Corps had added greatly to my experience and knowledge, and I will remain forever grateful to all those who helped me in my work, sparing no effort for our country's defence.

Chapter 7

# THE UNDECLARED WAR ON THE KHALKHIN GOL

In late May 1939, as Deputy Commander of the Byelorussian Military District, I and my assistants conducted command and staff field exercises in the vicinity of Minsk, in which commanders of cavalry and some tank detachments took part, including chiefs of staff and other operational personnel.

The exercises were already over, and on June 1 we analyzed their result in the Headquarters of the 3rd Cavalry Corps in Minsk. Quite unexpectedly Divisional Commissar I. Z. Susaikov, Member of the Military Council of the District, told me that he had received a telephone call from Moscow and that I was to leave at once and report to the People's Commissar for Defence on the following day.

I boarded the first Moscow-bound train and came to Voroshilov's office promptly on the morning of June 2.

Voroshilov's special aide, R. P. Khmelnitsky, told me that the People's Commissar was already waiting for me.

"You go in and meanwhile I'll see to it that all essentials are packed for you for a long journey."

"What long journey?"

"Go and see the People's Commissar. He'll tell you all about it."

On entering Voroshilov's office I reported my arrival. He inquired about my health, and said:

"Japanese troops have made a surprise attack and crossed into friendly Mongolia which the Soviet Government is committed to defend from external aggression by the Treaty of March 12, 1936. Here is a map of the invasion area showing the situation as of May 30."

"Here," he pointed out, "the Japanese had for a long time

carried out provocative attacks on Mongolian frontier guards and here the Japanese Hailar garrison invaded MPR territory and attacked Mongolian frontier units which were covering area east of the Khalkhin Gol.

"I think they've started a big military gamble. At any rate, it's only the beginning... Could you fly there rightaway and if need be assume command of the troops?"

"I am ready this minute," I answered.

"Good. The plane will be waiting at the Central Airfield at 16:00 hours. Get in touch with Smorodinov. He will give you the requisite information and arrange for liaison with the General Staff. A small group of military experts will be flying with you. Good-bye now, and all the best."

After leaving the People's Commissar I went to the General Staff to see Ivan Smorodinov, Acting Deputy Chief of the General Staff, whom I knew from before. On his desk lay a map similar to the one the People's Commissar showed me a few minutes before. Smorodinov said he could not add much to what the People's Commissar had said, and all we had to arrange was communications.

"The moment you arrive," said Smorodinov, "see what's going on and report to us. But pull no punches."

We parted.

Soon we were air-borne, heading for Mongolia. Our last stopover before crossing the border was Chita. Here we were invited to the Military Council of the District for a briefing. At headquarters we were met by V. F. Yakovlev, Commander of the Military District, and D. A. Gapanovich, member of the Military Council. They informed us of the latest developments. The new element was that the Japanese Air Force was penetrating deep into Mongolian air space, chased our lorries and cars and shot them up.

In the morning of June 5 we arrived at Tamtsak-Bulak where the Headquarters of the 57th Special Corps was stationed, and met Corps Commander N. V. Feklenko, Regimental Commissar M. S. Nikishev, who was commissar of the corps, and Brigade Commander A. M. Kushchev, chief of staff.

Reporting on the situation, Kushchev made the reservation that things were not yet sufficiently clear.

It was evident from his report that the corps command did not know the real state of affairs. I asked Feklenko whether he believed it possible to control troops 120 kilometres from the battlefield.

"It's hard to deny we are a bit too far away," he said. "But the fighting area is operatively unprepared. There is not one kilometre of telephone or telegraph wires ahead, no command post and no landing strips."

"And what is being done about all that?"

"We are about to send for timber and start building a command post."

It turned out that none of the commanding officers except Regimental Commissar M. S. Nikishev had visited the site of the fighting. I suggested that the commander of the corps and I go to the front line immediately and study the situation. He said, however, that he expected an urgent phone call from Moscow and suggested that M. S. Nikishev would go with me.

On the way, the Commissar told me in minute detail about the corps, its combat readiness, about its headquarters, its commanding officers and political instructors. Nikishev made a very good impression on me. He obviously knew his job, his people, and all their weaknesses and merits.

After making a detailed survey of the terrain in the area of the fighting and talking with the commanding officers and commissars of our units and those of the Mongolian Army, including the staff officers, I came away with a more or less clear picture of the nature and scope of the hostilities and of the capacity of the Japanese troops. I also noted the errors made by the Soviet and Mongolian troops. One of the most serious was the lack of thorough reconnaissance.

By all evidence this was not a mere border incident; it was obvious that the Japanese had not given up their aggressive plans against the Soviet Far East and the Mongolian People's Republic, and that shortly they would escalate their action.

After appraising the situation we came to the conclusion that the forces of the 57th Special Corps deployed in the MPR would not be able to stop the Japanese, particularly if they should decide to begin military action in other areas as well, and from other directions.

Upon returning to the command post and discussing the

situation with the corps command, we dispatched a report to the People's Commissar for Defence. The report presented a brief plan of action for the Soviet-Mongolian troops: to hold the bridgehead on the right bank of the Khalkhin Gol (the Mongol name of the Khalkha River), and at the same time prepare for a counter-offensive from Mongolian territory. The next day we received an answer. The People's Commissar for Defence fully agreed with our assessment of the situation and the plan of action. That day an order was received from the People's Commissar, relieving Feklenko of the command of the 57th Special Corps and assigning me to this post.

Aware of the difficult situation, I requested the People's Commissar for Defence to reinforce our Air Force units, and also asked for not less than three rifle divisions, one tank brigade and substantial artillery reinforcements. Without this, we believed, it was impossible to gain victory.

A day later we were informed that the General Staff had accepted our proposals. Additional aircraft were being flown to us and also a group of pilots composed of 21 Heroes of the Soviet Union headed by the famous Y. V. Smushkevich whom I knew well from the Byelorussion Military District. At the same time we received the modernized I-16 and Chaika planes.

The pilots who were Heroes of the Soviet Union conducted training courses with newly arrived young pilots. The results were felt very shortly.

On June 22, 1939, ninety five of our fighters engaged in a fierce dog-fight with 120 Japanese planes over the territory of the MPR. Many Heroes of the Soviet Union participated and gave the Japanese a lesson to remember. On June 24, the Japanese Air Force repeated its massive raid and was again thrashed. After the defeat, the Japanese command began withdrawing its planes from the battle in haphazard manner.

On June 26, up to 60 aircraft appeared over lake Buir Nor. A ruthless dog-fight with our fighters ensued. The Japanese pilots taking part in this battle were obviously more experienced than their predecessors and yet they could not come out on top. As we learned later, the Japanese brought into this action the aces of their air force operating in China. In all, between June 22 and 26, the Japanese lost 64 planes.

Dog-fights continued regularly almost every day up to July

l, though they were not as fierce as before. In these battles, our pilots improved their skill and tempered their will power.

I often gratefully remember Gritsevets, Kravchenko, Zabaluyev, Denisov, Rakhov, Skobarikhin, Orlov, Kustov, Gerasimov, and many other air aces. The commander of their group, Y. V. Smushkevich, was an excellent organizer, an expert in airplanes, and an ace flier. He was a very modest man, a splendid commander and a Communist of high rating, loved by all the pilots.

It was no accident that the enemy air force was so active. It was clearly bent on dealing us a serious blow and gaining air supremacy to support a major Japanese offensive.

Indeed, as it later transpired, the Japanese had been concentrating their troops in the area of the Khalkhin Gol throughout June and were preparing them for an operation code-named "Second Period of the Namonhan Incident", which was provided for in the plan of their military aggression. The immediate goal of the operation was:

— to surround and rout the entire group of Soviet and Mongolian troops deployed east of the Khalkha river (Khalkhin Gol);

— to cross the Khalkhin Gol and emerge on the west bank with the aim of destroying our reserves;

— to seize and expand the bridgehead west of the Khalkhin Gol and pave the way for further actions.

To carry out this operation the enemy moved up from the region of Hailar troops intended for action as part of the 6th Army, which was then being deployed.

The Japanese Command reckoned that the forthcoming offensive would end in the first half of July, so that all hostilities on Mongolian territory could end before autumn. It was so sure of victory that it even invited some foreign correspondents and military attaches to the combat area to view its victorious actions. Among those invited were the correspondents and military attaches of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.

Before dawn on July 3, Colonel I. M. Afonin, senior adviser of the Mongolian Army, went to the Bain-Tsagan mountain to check the defences of the Mongolian 6th Cavalry Division. There he quite unexpectedly discovered Japanese troops which had crossed the Khalkhin Gol under cover of darkness and

attacked Mongolian units. Before the dawn of July 3, taking advantage of their superior strength, the Japanese seized Bain-Tsagan Mountain and the adjacent territory. The Mongolian 6th Cavalry Division retreated to the north-western part of Bain-Tsagan mountain.

Seeing the dangerous new situation, Colonel Afonin immediately returned to the command post of the Soviet troops (soon, on July 15 the 57th Special Corps was converted into the First Army Group) and reported on the situation on Bain-Tsagan Mountain. It was clear that nothing could prevent the Japanese troops in this area from hitting the flank and rear of our main force.

In view of this complication, all reserves were at once alerted and ordered to move in the general direction of the Bain-Tsagan, and attack the enemy. The 11th Tank Brigade under Brigade Commander Yakovlev was ordered to strike on the march. The 24th Motorized Regiment supported by an artillery battalion under the command of Colonel Fedyuninsky was ordered to attack the enemy in close interaction with the 11th Tank Brigade. The 7th Armoured Brigade under Colonel Lesovoi was to attack from the south. An armoured battalion of the Mongolian 8th Cavalry Division was also moving there.

Early in the morning on July 3, the Soviet Command arrived in the area of Bain-Tsagan Mountain. The heavy artillery battalion of the 185th Artillery Regiment was ordered to set up observation posts on Bain-Tsagan and to open fire on the Japanese. Simultaneously, the artillery deployed across the Khalkhin Gol (supporting the 9th Armoured Brigade) was ordered to shift its fire to the Bain-Tsagan. All available aircraft were alerted.

At 7 o'clock in the morning the first groups of our bombers and fighters began attacking and bombing the Bain-Tsagan. It was extremely important for us to hold the enemy in check with aircraft hits and artillery fire until the arrival of reserves for the counterblow.

To keep up the enemy from crossing the Khalkhin Gol and prevent him from massing forces in the mountain area, the heavy bombing and shelling of the crossing was to continue without a stop.

At about 9 o'clock in the morning the advance detachments

of the vanguard battalion of the 11th Tank Brigade began arriving in the combat area.

The relation of strength directly in the Bain-Tsagan area was the following: the enemy had succeeded in concentrating over 10,000 men on the mountain; the Soviet troops had only a little over 1,000 men; the Japanese troops had some 100 artillery pieces and up to 60 anti-tank guns, while we had 50 or so pieces of ordnance, including the supporting artillery on the eastern bank of the Khalkhin Gol.

But we had in our ranks the heroic 11th Tank Brigade which had up to 150 tanks plus the 154 armoured vehicles of the 7th Armoured Brigade and the Mongolian 8th Armoured Battalion equipped with 45-mm guns.

Thus, our trump card was the armour, which we decided to send into action immediately in order to crush the Japanese troops which had just crossed the river, not letting them dig in and organize anti-tank defences. There was no time to lose, since the enemy, who saw our tanks advance, rapidly began to take defensive measures and started bombing them. The tanks had no shelter. For hundreds of kilometres around us the terrain was absolutely open. There was not even a bush in sight.

At 9:15 that morning I met Yakovlev, commander of the 11th Tank Brigade, who was with the main force of the vanguard battalion and directed its actions. After discussing the situation, we decided to call out all our air force, speed up the movement of our tanks and artillery, and attack the enemy not later than 10:45. Most of the vehicles of the 11th Tank Brigade were deployed for combat by that time, and attacked the Japanese troops.

Here is what Japanese soldier Nakamura wrote down in his diary on July 3:

"Several scores of tanks attacked unexpectedly, causing chaos among our troops. There was terrible confusion. Horses stampeded, neighing and dragging gun carriage with them; cars scattered in all directions. Two of our planes were shot down. The morale of our troops fell. Japanese soldiers could be heard using such words as 'terrible', 'sad', 'disspirited', 'ghastly', etc., more and more often."

The battle raged round the clock on July 4, and only by

3 o'clock in the morning on July 5 the enemy's resistance wa broken and the Japanese began hastily to retreat to the rive crossing. But the crossing had been blown up by their own sap pers who had feared a breakthrough of our tanks. Japanese offi cers dived headlong into the water in full uniform and drowned before the eyes of our tankmen.

The remnants of the Japanese troops that had taken the Bain-Tsagan were destroyed to the last man on the eastern slopes of the mountain near the Khalkhin Gol. Thousands of dead bodies, carcasses of horses, a multitude of crashed and brok-en guns, mortars, machine guns and cars littered Bain-Tsagan mountain. Forty-five Japanese aircraft, including 20 dive-bombers, were shot down.

Commander of the 6th Japanese Army, General Kamatsubara (who had once served as military attache with the Japanese Embassy in Moscow) saw that things were getting out of hand and on the night of July 4 withdrew to the other side of the river with his operational group. The withdrawal from the battlefield of the Japanese commanding general and his entou-rage was described in his diary by one Otani, a senior noncom-missioned officer at Kamatsubara's Headquarters:

"General Kamatsubara's car moved softly and cautiously. The moonlit valley was as bright as day. The night was as quiet and tense as we were. The waters of the Khalkha were lit up by the moon and reflected flares thrown by the enemy. The picture was frightening. Finally we found a bridge and crossed the river safely. It was rumoured that our units were surround-ed by a large number of enemy tanks and faced complete destruction. We must be on our guard."

In the morning of July 5 everything fell silent on the Bain-Tsagan and along the we[illegible] The battle ended in utter defea[illegible] forces. This battle was a [illegible] the part of the Red Army, [illegible] no longer inclined to risk crossing to the western bank of the Khalkhin Gol.

Meanwhile, the eastern bank of the river was a scene of fierce fighting. The Japanese routed on the Bain-Tsagan had succeeded in withdrawing some troops to the eastern bank in a bid to help the holding force of General Yasuoka which,

too, after sustaining heavy casualties, failed to attain success.

The rout of a large Japanese force on Bain-Tsagan mountain and successful resistance on the eastern bank of the Khalkhin Gol boosted the morale of our troops as well as that of the Mongolian units. Officers and men congratulated their neighbours and friends heartily on the victory gained.

The major role in the Bain-Tsagan battle was played by the 11th Tank Brigade, the 7th Armoured Brigade, the Mongolian 8th Armoured Battalion, and the artillery and air force units which supported them. The battle showed that tank and motorized troops cooperating skilfully with the air force and mobile artillery are a foolproof means for carrying out swift, decisive operations.

At this stage the enemy confined himself to battle reconnaissance. However, on August 12 a regiment of infantry supported by artillery, armoured vehicles, some tanks, and 22 bombers, attacked the Mongolian 22nd Cavalry Regiment and occupied the Bolshiye Peski height in the southern sector of the front.

The enemy had been building defence lines all along the front: timber was brought in, dugouts built and fortifications erected. The enemy air force, after sustaining heavy losses (116 Japanese aircraft were shot down between July 23 and August 4), confined itself to reconnaissance flights and minor bombing raids against the central crossing of the river, artillery positions, and reserves.

The Soviet-Mongolian Command was preparing thoroughly for a general offensive not later than August 20 with the aim of wiping out the troops that had invaded the Mongolian People's Republic.

At the request of the Military Council new reinforcements, armaments and other supplies were arriving from the Soviet Union for the First Army Group. In addition, two rifle divisions, a tank brigade, two artillery regiments, and other units were moving up. Bomber and fighter units, too, were reinforced.

To carry out the forthcoming intricate operation we had to bring over by country roads from the supply railhead 650 kilometers removed from the Khalkha River, the following materiel:

— artillery ammunition — 18,000 tons

— aircraft ammunition — 6,500 tons
— fuel and lubricants — 15,000 tons
— foodstuffs — 4,000 tons
— solid fuel — 7,500 tons
— other items — 4,000 tons

To get all these supplies in before the operation we needed 4,900 lorries, while only 2,636 were available. After August 14 another 1,250 lorries and 375 tank-trucks arrived from the Soviet Union, but we were still short of several hundred lorries and tank-trucks.

The brunt of all this transportation was borne by our army transport and the service vehicles, including artillery tractors. We decided on this extreme because, firstly, we had no other choice and, secondly, because we believed our defences to be quite stable.

The drivers worked miracles. Despite the blistering heat and torrid winds, the round trip of 1,300-1,400 kilometres took just five days.

We were greatly assisted by the Trans-Baikal Military District in organizing our rear. Without this help we probably would not have been able to build up the supplies needed for the operation in so short a time.

We believed that the decisive factor for the success of the coming operation would be the operational and tactical element of surprise that was to deny the enemy any chance of withstanding our shattering blow or taking counter-measures. We made a special point of the fact that the Japanese who had no effective tank units or motorized troops, would not be able to move their units quickly from secondary sectors of the front and from the rear against our shock groups active on the enemy flanks with a view to surrounding the Japanese 6th Army.

To disguise our undertaking and to keep it secret, the Military Council of the Army Group elaborated a plan for distracting the enemy:

1) concealed movement and concentration of troops arriving from the Soviet Union to reinforce the army group;

2) concealed regrouping of forces and supplies in the defence lines across the Khalkha River;

3) concealed movement of forces and supplies across the Khalkha;

4) reconnoitering the attack positions; sectors and lines of advance;

5) highly secret training in their missions by all arms of the service involved in the coming operation;

6) additional covert reconnaissance by all arms and services;

7) misinforming and deceiving the enemy as regards our true intentions.

These measures were aimed at creating the impression that we were making no preparations for an offensive operation. We wanted the Japanese to think that we were merely building up our defences and nothing else. It was decided therefore that all movement of troops, their concentration and redeployment, should take place in the dead of night when the enemy's visual observation from land and air would be minimal.

It was strictly forbidden before August 17-18 to move any troops into areas from which we intended to thrust into the flanks and rear of the enemy. The officers who were to conduct on-the-spot reconnaissance used lorries and wore soldiers' uniforms.

We knew that the enemy tapped our telephone wires and intercepted radio messages. So we decided to deceive him with radio and telephone reports that were elaborated to concern nothing but the construction of defences and preparations for the autumn and winter. The radio exchanges were mainly in a code which could be easily deciphered.

We had printed thousands of instruction leaflets for the soldiers in the defence lines. These were passed on to the enemy so that the Japanese should be convinced of the political orientation of Soviet and Mongolian troops.

The concentration of forces — of shock groups on the flanks — and the movement of troops to the jumping off areas had to occur in the small hours of August 20. By dawn everything was to be concealed in the thick brush along the river in specially prepared shelters. Pieces of ordnance, mortars, vehicles and all other equipment were hidden under camouflage nets made of material that we found available on the spot. The tank units were moved to the jumping-off areas in small groups from different directions shortly before the artillery attack and air raids. This was easily done thanks to their reserve of speed.

During the night all movements were "jammed" by noise specially created by aircraft, artillery, mortar, machine-gun and rifle fire, conducted according to a strict schedule that was dovetailed with the movements.

For purposes of camouflage, we used special sound equipment which imitated aircraft engines, the movement of tanks, the driving in of wooden piles, etc. We began to use this equipment 12-15 days before the planned movement of the shock groups to accustom the Japanese to these noises. At the beginning the Japanese mistook them for real troop movements and began to fire at the areas from which the noises came. Later, they either got used to it or realized what it was, and usually stopped paying attention to all noises, which was exactly what we wanted during the real regrouping and concentration of forces.

To prevent the enemy from getting wind of our offensive, its plan was elaborated in the HQ of the army group personally by the army group commander, the member of the Military Council, the Chief of the political department, the chief of staff and the chief of the operations division. The chiefs of arms and the chief of logistics worked only in separate restricted fields according to a programme approved by the Commander of the army group. Only one typist typed out the plan of the operation, the combat orders and other operational papers.

With the time of the offensive drawing nearer, various categories of officers were successively put into the know, beginning four days and ending one day before the operation. Soldiers and officers got their combat orders three hours before the offensive.

Further events and the entire course of our offensive demonstrated that the special misinformation of the enemy, camouflage, and other arrangements to ensure surprise, played an extremely important role, for the enemy was indeed caught unawares.

Thorough reconnaissance figured prominently in the preparations for the August operation. Many commanding officers, staffs and intelligence departments betrayed a lack of experience at the beginning of the action. Our intelligence men were given numerous assignments which frequently were impossible to carry out and had no special significance. As a result, their

efforts were wasted to the detriment of the main intelligence objective. Often, intelligence officers misled the command by their tentative assumptions based on pure speculation.

Naturally, in the history of battles and operations there have been cases when such assumptions came true. In our case, however, we had no right to plan such a serious operation on the basis of doubtful intelligence. In the coming operation of surrounding and destroying the enemy we were interested most of all in the exact location and numerical strength of the Japanese troops.

Obtaining intelligence about the enemy was made doubly difficult by the absence of any civilian population in the area from whom we could have got some information. There were no Japanese deserters. The Barguts (Mongol herdsmen living in the north-west of Manchuria) who went over to our side knew nothing, as a rule, about the location and strength of Japanese units and detachments. We obtained the best intelligence from combat reconnaissance. And yet, this intelligence related only to the main line of resistance and the closest artillery and mortar positions.

Our reconnaissance aircraft supplied us with good pictures showing the deep enemy defences. And yet, seeing that usually the enemy made ample use of camouflage and other deceptive means including mock-ups, we had to be very cautious in our conclusions and establish what was genuine and what was not by thorough rechecking.

Small reconnaissance groups could only rarely infiltrate the enemy lines since the Japanese closely watched the terrain in the area of the deployment of their troops.

However, in spite of all these unfavourable circumstances, we managed to organize reconnaissance and get some valuable information.

The reconnaissance group of the 149th Motorized Rifle Regiment worked very well. Regimental commander Major I. M. Remizov himself was in charge of organizing it, and he knew the job in detail. I saw Major Remizov at one of the training sessions. He demonstrated to the intelligence men how best to capture a prisoner from ambush, and how to infiltrate heavily guarded enemy lines at night. Major Remizov was an extremely resourceful scout, and the soldiers,

who loved and respected him, were really pleased that the regimental commander himself was teaching them the tricks of the trade. For the heroism that Major Remizov displayed on the Khalkhin Gol he was given the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

We believed that the weakest spots of the Japanese were the flanks, and lack of mobile reserves. As for the terrain, it was extremely difficult for the offensive at all points.

The plan for the Party-political work with the troops during the operation was also made to suit the concrete tasks we faced. It consisted of two parts, one preparatory and the other operational.

At the preparatory stage the main thing was to ensure the success of the measures to be carried out by the Military Council of our Army Group to concentrate men and supplies for the coming operation, and of its work among the troops arriving from the interior of the Soviet Union, passing on battle experience, etc. To carry out these important tasks, all Communists, political instructors and commanding officers were called upon to intensify their work in sections, platoons and companies. Special attention was devoted to the rear services, which were to see to the timely arrival of supplies.

The Soviet troops knew very well that our proletarian and internationalist duty committed us to helping the fraternal Mongolian people in those rigorous days of trial.

Extensive political work was done by the newspaper *Geroicheskaya Krasnoarmeiskaya* (Heroic Red Army Paper). Its every issue popularized the glorious deeds of our soldiers and officers, and the traditions of the Red Army. Once the operation began, it would be chiefly engaged in putting out and quickly disseminating news leaflets for the officers and men.

Very active contributors to the paper were writers Vladimir Stavsky, Konstantin Simonov, Lev Slavin, Boris Lapin, and Zinovy Khatsrevin, and the ubiquitous press photographers M Bernstein and V. Temin. I would like to say a few very special words about Vladimir Stavsky. That talented writer and propagandist lived a soldiers' life. He was a brilliant war correspondent. My own association with him lasted until the end of 1941. In early August he came to the 24th Army of our

Reserve Front, where I was making ready to attack and crush a Nazi force at Yelnya. We embraced and recalled the embattled days on the Khalkhin Gol. Stavsky wasted no time and went off to the front lines, where a tense battle was in progress. By the morning of the next day he sent in a contribution to the Army newspaper, and also a note to me of the difficulties our troops had to face. A great pity that this gifted writer died, laying down his life as a true soldier in the fighting at Nevel in 1943.

The editor of the newspaper was D. O. Ortenberg, a capable and fastworking journalist. He knew how to organize the work and keep his staff on its toes. He asked Party and political workers, commanding officers and soldiers to contribute to the newspaper. And they responded readily. During the Great Patriotic War, Ortenberg was editor of *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the newspaper of the Soviet Armed Forces, and I have had occasion to run across him in the active army.

But back to the Khalkhin Gol. On August 20, 1939, Soviet and Mongolian troops began their general offensive aimed at surrounding and wiping out the Japanese troops.

It was a quiet and warm Sunday. The Japanese Command, confident that the Soviet and Mongolian troops were not even thinking of an offensive, allowed the generals and senior officers to take their Sunday leaves. Many of them were far away from their troops: some went to Hailar, some to Hanchur and others to Dzhandzin Sumeh. We had taken this important factor into consideration when picking the day to launch the offensive.

At 6:15 a.m. our artillery opened up for all it was worth against the enemy anti-aircraft guns and machine guns. Some of our batteries lobbed smoke shells on the objectives to be bombed by our aircraft.

In the area of the Khalkhin Gol the roar of aircraft approaching combat positions grew ever more deafening. Over 150 bombers and some 100 fighters were in the air. Their striking power was great and had the effect of raising the morale of our officers and men.

At 8.45 a.m. artillery and mortars of all calibres opened fire against enemy targets, working it up to the limit of their technical capacity. Meanwhile, our aircraft hit targets behind the lines. All telephones and radios carried the coded command: the general offensive starts in 15 minutes.

At nine sharp, when our aircraft were strafing the enemy and bombing his artillery, red flares went up announcing the beginning of the offensive. The attacking units, covered by artillery fire, charged.

Our air and artillery strike was so powerful and successful that the enemy was morally and physically depressed. During the first hour and a half he could not even return the gun fire. The Japanese observation posts, communication lines and fire positions were destroyed.

The offensive went on in strict compliance with the operational and combat plans, and only the 6th Tank Brigade, a part of which had failed to cross the Khalkhin Gol, sent only some of its units into action on August 20. The crossing and concentration of the brigade was not finished until the end of that day.

Desperate fighting went on during August 21 and 22, especial-
 in the area of Bolshiye Peski, where the enemy offered
nore obstinate resistance than we thought he would. To
ectify the miscalculation we had to bring in the 9th Armoured
Brigade from the reserve and reinforce our artillery.

After destroying the flanking groups of the enemy, our armoured and motorized units closed the circle round the 6th Japanese Army by the evening of August 26 and thereupon began to split and destroy the surrounded enemy.

The fighting was made difficult by the quicksands, the deep ravines, and the sand dunes.

The Japanese fought to the last man. But gradually their soldiers came to realize the flimsiness of the official propaganda that the Imperial Army was invincible, since it was suffering incredibly heavy casualties without winning a single battle in four months.

The entries made in their diaries by some Japanese officers and men demonstrate most vividly what they felt during those days.

Below are some passages from the diary of Fakuta, a fallen Japanese soldier:

"August 20, 1939

"Good weather set in this morning. The fighters and bombers of the enemy, some 50 of them, appeared in the air in groups. At 6:30 a.m. the enemy artillery opened massive fire. The shells whine overhead.

"Thousands of shells are falling close to us. It is frightening. The observation posts are doing everything possible to spot the enemy artillery, but without success because enemy bombers bomb and fighters strafe our troops. The enemy is triumphant all along the front.

"At 7:45

"It is becoming ever more fearful. The moans of soldiers and the explosions remind one of hell. The situation is most depressing. We are in a bad hole, and surrounded. If the night is dark, all of us will have to be in the communication trenches standing in a file... The soldier's soul is sad... Our situation is complicated, desperate, terribly confusing.

"At 8:30

"The enemy artillery does not stop shelling our troops.

There is no salvation wherever we turn, shells are falling everywhere and our only salvation is in Bdisatva.

"At 14:40

"A ruthless battle is raging. We do not know how many wounded or killed we have... The shelling does not stop.

"On August 21

"A multitude of Soviet and Mongolian aircraft are bombing our positions, their artillery, too, is worrying us all the time. After the bombing and shelling comes the enemy infantry. The number of killed is increasing. During the night the enemy air force bombed our rear positions.

"August 22, at 9:30

"The enemy infantry began an attack, their machine-guns opened a devastating fire. We were in great danger and took terrible fright. Our morale sank. When all the officers were killed I was made commander of the company. This excited me awfully and I did not sleep all night."

Here ends the diary of Fakuta.

Great attention was then paid in the Japanese Army to ideological brainwashing of soldiers against the Red Army. Our army was pictured as technically backward and was compared in combat capacity to the old tsarist army back in the days of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. That is why what the Japanese soldiers saw during the battles on the Khalkhin Gol when they were subjected to the powerful assault of Soviet tanks, aviation, artillery and well-organized infantry, came to them as a big surprise.

The Japanese soldiers were told that if they were taken prisoner they would be shot, but before that they would be tortured. And at that time this sort of thing had its effects.

But in due course all these fibs collapsed. I remember very well that on one of those August days at dawn a captured Japanese soldier was brought to me to the observation post. His face was swollen from mosquito bites. He had been captured by scouts of I. I. Fedyuninsky's regiment in the reeds.

To my question how he had been so badly bitten by mosquitoes he answered that together with another soldier he had been put in the reeds to watch the Russians. No

mosquito nets had been issued to them. The company commander had ordered them to sit tight and not move so they should not be spotted. At night they were attacked by mosquitoes but did not move until the morning, bearing the mosquito bites stoically.

"When the Russians shouted something and raised their rifles," the captive said, "I put up my hands for I could no longer bear the agony of it."

We needed intelligence about the Japanese troops in that very sector where this soldier was captured. To loosen his tongue I ordered that half a glass of vodka be given to him. To my surprise he looked at the glass and said: "Please, take a gulp from it first because I am afraid of poison. I am the only son of my father who has a haberdashery and consequently I am his sole heir."

Our interpreter observed that according to the written rules Japanese soldiers received from their officers, they should die with the word "Banzai" on their lips. The soldier chuckled and said: "Father told me to return home alive and not dead."

On August 31, 1939, the last of the seats of resistance of the 6th Japanese Army, which had invaded the Mongolian People's Republic, were wiped out. Visiting our troops, Comrade Choibalsan cordially thanked our soldiers for sealing with their blood their loyalty to the commitments they had taken upon themselves. The devastating counter-offensive of the Soviet and Mongolian troops, the unheard of defeat of a crack Japanese army made the Japanese ruling quarters reconsider their views on the power and combat readiness of the Soviet Armed Forces, and especially on the morale of Soviet soldiers.

People's Commissar for Defence Voroshilov wrote in his Order of November 7, 1939: "The officers and men participating in the battles in the area of the Khalkha river have covered themselves with true glory. For their bravery and heroism, and excellent execution of combat orders, all those who took part in the battles there deserve our deep gratitude."

The heroic actions of our soldiers were inspired by the Communist Party and the army's Party organization. The

courageous example of the Communists gave heart to the soldiers and spurred them to feats of daring.

I would like to mention those commanding officers and political instructors whose organizational skill, whose Party political work, and competent command, expedited the defeat of the Japanese invasion force and reflected honour on Soviet arms.

I warmly remember Division Commissar M. S. Nikishev, a skilful leader and a highly principled Party member. He succeeded in organizing the work of the Military Council in such a way that even under the most strained and complicated conditions we never had any disagreements. All of us who had fought on the Khalkhin Gol were deeply saddened by news of his death at the beginning of the Patriotic War in the Ukraine where he was member of the Military Council of the 5th Army of the South-Western Front.

How, too, can we forget the hero pilots Y. V. Smushkevich, S. I. Gritsevets, V. M. Zabaluyev, G. P. Kravchenko, V. F. Skobarikhin, V. G. Rakhov, and those many others who displayed exceptional bravery and courage.

Pursuing a group of Japanese airplanes, fighter pilot S. I. Gritsevets, Hero of the Soviet Union, saw that the plane of his commander V. M. Zabaluyev was missing. After firing a number of rounds at the fleeing enemy, Gritsevets began to look for the missing plane. He made a round over the area of the last attack and spotted the plane in the steppe on territory held by the Japanese. Diving low Gritsevets saw Zabaluyev beside the plane. Apparently something had gone wrong with the engine. What to do? Despite the great risk of landing behind enemy lines, Gritsevets decided to save his commander. He acted on Suvorov's maxim: "Save your comrade even if you die."

This daring and always composed pilot made a beautiful landing on terrain pock-marked by shellpits and quickly taxied to Zabaluyev's plane. He literally squeezed his commander into the cockpit of his one-seat fighter plane. Then, before the eyes of the stunned Japanese soldiers, he put the nose of his machine against the wind and took off with a double load, and safely reached the airfield.

In one of the reconnaissance fights with the Japanese, a lorry was damaged in the unit of Major Kasperovich. The driver, private Timokhin, did not abandon the lorry and stayed in the battlefield in no man's land, trying to fix the damage. The Japanese who saw his bold action decided to capture him alive. Timokhin fought like a real Soviet soldier should. Badly wounded, he continued to resist.

At that moment Major Kasperovich, the commanding officer of the unit, undaunted by the extremely serious situation, took the risky decision to save the soldier. He ordered to concentrate direct artillery fire on the Japanese weapon emplacements, and led his company into an attack on the enemy. In an armoured vehicle he drove at high speed to Timokhin's lorry and took it in tow. When Timokhin was brought to safety, he thanked his commanding officer and his mates with tears in his eyes because they had saved him from certain death at the risk of their own lives.

"I was sure you would not forget me and would not leave me to die," he said before being taken off to a hospital.

Hero of the Soviet Union, Senior Lieutenant V. F. Skobarikhin, a pilot, in an unequal dog-fight, while saving his comrade Senior Lieutenant Vuss, rammed a Japanese fighter plane and, having destroyed it, engaged two other planes. When the Japanese pilots sensed who they were dealing with, they made off for their airfields. Despite the serious damage to his plane, Skobarikhin reached his airfield safely. Fragments of the enemy plane were found on the wing of his plane.

Hero of the Soviet Union, Senior Lieutenant V. G. Rakhov, distinguished himself, too, in the air battles. On July 29, he met up with a Japanese ace pilot, Takeo. Skilfully controlling his plane, V. G. Rakhov engaged the enemy. In the dog-fight, the Japanese pilot demonstrated all his skill and yet Rakhov set fire to his plane. The Japanese baled out, and seeing that he was coming down on Mongolian territory, attempted suicide. But he was taken prisoner.

On recovering from his ordeal and seeing that he was being well treated by officers of the Red Army, Takeo asked his captors to introduce him to the pilot who had so skilfully shot him down. When Rakhov approached, the Japanese bowed low to him in tribute.

I gratefully remember many commanders with whom I was in daily contact at that time. At the beginning of the hostilities on the Khalkhin Gol, Ivan Fedyuninsky was administrative assistant commander of a regiment. When we needed a commander for the 24th Motorized Regiment, Fedyuninsky's name was given as the first choice. And we never had reason to rue it. In the most complex of situations Fedyuninsky always found the correct solution. When the general offensive began his regiment successfully fought the enemy. After the end of the fighting on the Khalkhin Gol, Fedyuninsky was appointed Commander of the 82nd Division, which during the initial stage of the Patriotic War obstinately fought the Germans in the neighbourhood of Mozhaisk. Later on, Major General Fedyuninsky acquitted himself splendidly as commander of a rifle corps of the South-Western Front, and then of the 42nd Army at Leningrad.

Brigade Commander Mikhail Potapov was my deputy. He was responsible for organizing the interaction between formations and arms of the service. And when we launched our general offensive, he was in command of the main group of forces on the right flank. He was a man of astonishing self-possession Nothing could upset him. He was absolutely calm in the most complicated and perilous situations. And the troops liked him for it He was just the same during the Patriotic War as commander of the 5th Army of the South-Western Front.

Communication in battle and in any military operation plays a decisive role. That is why I would like to address a few words of praise to Colonel Alexei Leonov, who always, in any situation, provided troop control with adequate communication.

Party organizations made a great contribution to our military mission. Especially praiseworthy were the Chief of the political department of the Army Group Pyotr Gorokhov, Regimental Commissar Roman Babiichuk, and secretary of the Party Committee of the Special Corps, Alexei Pomogailo, and commissar Ivan Zakovorotny.

Among the political officers of larger units, Regimental Commisar Vasili Sychov, commissar of the 9th Motorized Brigade, figured especially prominently. In the past he was

a metal worker from the Urals. Sychov efficiently helped his commanding officer and often led his men in combat, his own courage inspiring them to feats of valour. During the Patriotic War when he was member of the Military Council of an army, he carried out his duties with the same daring and courage, as in those days.

Days and nights the medical personnel laboured in the most difficult field conditions, saving the lives of our officers and men, and not only ours at that: they displayed a most humane attitude towards captured Japanese.

I remember my meetings with Professor M. N. Akhutin. Once I was told that the Professor, though dead tired after performing many operations, had ordered that his blood be given to a wounded officer. I rang him to ask that blood be obtained from some younger doctor. But Akhutin barked into the telephone:

"I've no time to find the necessary blood group." He asked me not to detain him, and gave his own blood after all.

Professor Akhutin devised and organized an efficient system of treating the wounded by stages. He extended much assistance to the medicos of the fraternal Mongolian army. Working from 15 to 18 hours daily, he found time to give further training to our young surgeons, and I do not think I will be far wrong in saying that those who worked with Professor Akhutin learned a great deal from him of the art of surgery. It was Professor Akhutin who supervised the early work of the young talented surgeon, A. A. Vishnevsky.

The Mongolian troops which fought in the Khalkhin Gol area cooperated well with the Soviet troops. This letter of the Mongolian soldiers to their Soviet mates had a moving effect on our men in the trenches:

"Dear brothers, men of the Red Army,

"We braves, commanders and political officers of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army operating in the Khalkhin Gol area, send you the warmest greetings in the name of the entire working people of Mongolia—you, the defenders of our land against the Japanese invaders, and congratulate you on the successful encirclement and complete rout of the *samurais* who had stolen into our country.

"Our people will inscribe in golden letters in the history of

their struggle for freedom and independence your heroic fight against the Japanese horde in the area of Khalkhin Gol. Were it not for your fraternal and selfless aid, we would not have had an independent, revolutionary Mongolian state. Were it not for the aid of the Soviet state, we would be faced with the same lot as that of the people of Manchuria. Japanese invaders would have overrun and plundered our land and our hard-working herdsmen. This has not happened and will never happen, because we are being helped, and saved from Japanese invasion, by the Soviet Union.

"Thank you, and many thanks to the Soviet people!"

The men of the Mongolian army admired the fighting skills of the Soviet troops. But we Soviet soldiers, too, were no less delighted by the heroic exploits of the Mongolian troopers and their commanders.

I personally was a witness to the feats of valour performed by the Mongolian men and their commanding officers. In this connection I would like to mention the names of some of them: Private Olzvoi, armoured car driver Khayan Kharveh, anti-aircraft gunners Chultem and Gombosuren, and horseman Khorloo. A great creative effort was made by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army Staff headed by the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army, Corps Commissar Zh. Lkhagvasuren.

A monument has been put up to the fallen Khalkhin Gol

After the termination of the hostilities on the Khalkhin Gol, the Command and Headquarters of the Army Group returned to Ulan Bator, the capital of the Mongolian People's Republic (in late October 1939). What I had known about Mongolia before was gleaned from books and newspapers. Now I had a chance of seeing the country with my own eyes.

It is especially pleasant for me to recall the sincerity of the Mongolian people, their kindness, and their trust in the Soviet Union. No matter where I was, in the homes of people, in state institutions or in military barracks, everywhere I saw in the place of honour a picture of Lenin of whom each Mongol I met spoke with heartfelt warmth and affection.

Our men often visited our Mongolian friends, while the Mongolian comrades often attended our exercises, and we did our best to pass on to them the combat experience we had gathered in the recent fighting.

Marshal Khorlogiin Choibalsan enjoyed great authority and affection among the Mongolian people. I became very friendly with him when in August 1939 he visited me at my command post on Khamar-Daba Mountain. He was an extraordinary person of great warmth and charm, a devoted friend of the Soviet Union, a real internationalist who devoted his life to the struggle against imperialism and fascism. The last time I saw him was during the Great Patriotic War when he brought to the front gift parcels from the Mongolian people to the soldiers of the Red Army.

We could see that Yumzhagiin Tsedenbal was held in high respect by his people. A well-educated and clever man, he had for many years worked with Choibalsan and other members of the Central Committee of the Party. After Choibalsan's demise in 1952, Tsedenbal was made Prime Minister. Later, as First Secretary of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and Chairman of the MPR Council of Ministers, he devoted all his strength, knowledge and energy to the building of socialism in his country, and fought for the friendship of fraternal Marxist-Leninist parties, and for peace, socialism and democracy all over the world.

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A monument has been put up to the fallen Khalkhin Gol heroes, which bears the following words:

"Eternal glory to the heroic warriors of the Soviet Army and the brave men of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army who fell in the battles against Japanese invaders in the area of the Khalkhin Gol for the freedom and independence of the peaceloving Mongolian people, for peace and the security of nations, and against imperialist aggression."

The Soviet Government, in recognition of the merits of Soviet army men in the clash with Japanese aggressors, conferred upon seventy of them the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Pilots S. I. Gritsevets, Y. V. Smushkevich and G. P. Kravchenko each received a second Gold Medal of Hero of the Soviet Union. The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was also conferred upon me, and in 1972 I was conferred the title of Hero of the Mongolian People's Republic.

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Running ahead of my narrative, I would like to note the assistance the Mongolian people rendered the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War against Nazi Germany.

In 1941 alone, the Mongolian People's Republic supplied 140 carloads of presents for Soviet soldiers to the total sum of 65,000,000 tugriks. The USSR Bank for Foreign Trade received from Mongolia 2,500,000 tugriks, 100,000 US dollars, and 300 kilograms of gold. These funds paid for 53 tanks, including 32 T-34s which were named after Sukhe-Bator and other Mongolian national heroes. Many of these tanks successfully fought the German troops and entered Berlin with the 112th Tank Brigade of the 1st Guards Tank Army.

Besides tanks, the people of Mongolia paid for an air squadron, the Mongolian Herdsman, which was turned over to the Soviet Air Force and assigned to the 2nd Orsha Guards Air Regiment. It fought very well all through the war.

In 1941-1942 the Red Army received 35,000 horses as a gift from Mongolia for its cavalry.

During the Patriotic War delegations from the Mongolian People's Republic headed by Choibalsan, Tsedenbal and other Mongolian statesmen, frequently visited our army units, each of the visits adding to the fraternal friendship of the Soviet and Mongolian peoples.

Great work during the military operations on the Khalkhin Gol was done by Tsedenbal and Soviet Ambassador I. A. Ivanov, thanks to whom our troops never experienced food shortages. Ever since then Tsedenbal has been a close friend of the Soviet people, for whom he represents the friendly people of Mongolia advancing to socialism. Ambassador Ivanov, for his part, enjoyed the sincere respect of the Mongolian people, statesmen and Party leaders, whom he had helped to the best of his ability.

Our troops returned to their winter quarters and summed up what had been done on the battlefields. It was heartening to see how our officers and men had augmented their knowledge of military matters. The best officers and men were sent to those units which had not taken part in the actual fighting on the Khalkhin Gol to pass on the experience they had obtained in fighting the Japanese. Fundamental changes were introduced in the political education of the troops.

All that taken together yielded effective results. It improved the combat readiness of our forces, and it was not accidental that the units which had fought in Mongolia in 1939 and 1940,

fought the Germans most effectively when moved to the Moscow area in 1941.

And in 1945, when, acting on its commitment to its Allies of the anti-Hitler coalition, and also in order to remove the military danger presented by militarist imperial Japan, which kept her million-strong Kwantung Army poised against the MPR and the Soviet Far East, the Soviet Government declared war on Japan, the fraternal Mongolian People's Republic did the same.

The Mongolian Army, led by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and personally by Choibalsan and Tsedenbal, operated on the right flank of the Soviet troops as a unit of the Soviet-Mongolian mechanized cavalry group under General I. A. Pliyev. Our soldiers, commanders and political officers attest to the bravery and prowess of the Mongolian troops, which cooperated most skilfully, daringly and effectively with their Soviet friends.

For his skilled generalship, Marshal of the MPR Choibalsan was decorated by the Soviet Government with the Order of Suvorov Ist Class, while Tsedenbal, Deputy Commander-in-Chief and Chief of the Political Administration of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Army, was decorated with the Order of Kutuzov 1st Class. Twenty-six Mongolian officers and men were decorated with the Order of the Red Banner, thirteen with the Order of Glory 3rd Class, and 82 with the Medal For Bravery. Altogether, the USSR Supreme Soviet decorated 302 Mongolians in 1945.

Today, the Mongolian People's Republic is a prosperous socialist country. Its industry, agriculture, science, and technology are making rapid headway. Considerable aid is being extended to it by the Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries. And in peacetime, as in the war against foreign aggressors, the guiding role is played by the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party, by its Central Committee.

In early May 1940, I was ordered to report to the People's Commissariat for Defence for a new posting.

By the time I arrived in Moscow, a government decree had been published conferring the ranks of general on the top com-

manders of the Red Army. Together with other comrades so honoured, I was conferred the rank of General of the Army.

A few days later I was received by J. V. Stalin and given the post of Commander of the Kiev Special Military District.

I had never met Stalin before and, naturally, looked forward to the audience with great excitement.

In the room besides Stalin were Kalinin, Molotov and other members of the Political Bureau.

Stalin asked, lighting his pipe:

"What do you think of the Japanese Army?"

"The Japanese soldiers who fought against us on the Khalkhin Gol are well trained, especially for fighting at close quarters," I answered. "They are obedient, diligent, and dogged in combat, especially in defence. Junior commanding officers are well trained and fanatically persistent. As a rule, they do not surrender and do not stop short of hara-kiri. Officers, especially senior officers and generals, are not adequately trained, lack initiative, and lean towards stereotype.

"As for the armaments of the Japanese Army, my opinion is that they are obsolete. The Japanese tanks of the same type as our MS-1s are definitely outdated. They are slow, poorly armed and have very limited action radius. I must also say that at the beginning of the campaign the Japanese air force was superior to ours. Their planes were better than ours until we received an improved version of the Chaika and the I-16. When the group of pilots headed by Y. V. Smushkevich, all of them Heroes of the Soviet Union, arrived, our air superiority was unquestionable. I should add that we had to deal with hand-picked, so-called imperial, units of the Japanese Army."

Stalin had listened very attentively, then asked:

"How did our troops fight?"

"Our regular troops fought very well. Especially good were the 36th Motorized Division under Petrov and the 57th Rifle Division under Galanin. The latter arrived from the Trans-Baikal Military District. The 82nd Rifle Division that came from the Urals was not good at first. It was formed of poorly trained officers and men. This division was deployed and reinforced with conscripts not long before its dispatch to Mongolia.

"The tank brigades, especially the 11th under Hero of the Soviet Union, Brigade Commander Yakovlev, did a very good

job. I would like to point out, however, that the BT-5 and BT-7 *tanks are too highly inflammable. If I had not had two tank and* three motorized armoured brigades, we would not have been able so quickly to surround and defeat the 6th Japanese Army. I believe we should greatly increase the number of armoured and mechanized units in our Armed Forces.

"Our artillery was in all respects better than the Japanese, especially in fire precision. In general, our troops are much superior to the Japanese.

"*The Mongolian troops, which were trained and supported by* the Red Army, fought well. Especially their armoured battalion in the Bain-Tsagan mountain area. It should be said, too, that, the Mongolian cavalry was sensitive to air attacks and artillery shelling, and sustained heavy casualties."

"What help did you get from Kulik, Pavlov and Voronov?" Stalin asked.

"Voronov helped well in planning the artillery fire and in organizing ammunition supplies. As for Kulik, I cannot say that he did anything useful. Pavlov helped our tankmen by sharing with them the experience he had gained in Spain."

I watched Stalin closely while I was talking and he seemed to be listening with interest. I continued:

"For all our troops, commanders of formations and units, and for me personally, the battles on the Khalkhin Gol were a very useful school of combat. I think that the Japanese, too, will draw the right conclusions about the strength and ability of the Red Army."

"Tell me what difficulties our troops encountered on the Khalkhin Gol?" Kalinin intervened.

"The main difficulties," I answered, "were connected with material and technical supplies. We had to transport everything that was vital for combat and survival over a distance of 650-700 kilometres. The closest supply stations were in the Trans-Baikal Military District. Even the firewood for cooking had to be brought from 600 kilometres away. The round trip made by lorries ran to 1,300-1,400 kilometres. Hence, the unheard of waste of petrol which had also to be supplied from the Soviet Union.

"In overcoming these difficulties we were greatly assisted by the Military Council of the Trans-Baikal Military District

and Colonel-General Stern with his personnel. Our troops suffered badly from mosquitoes, of which there is a teeming multitude on the Khalkhin Gol. At dusk they simply ate us alive. The Japanese had special mosquito nets. We had none, and had them made after great delays."

"What, in your opinion, was the main aim of the Japanese Government in organizing the invasion?" Kalinin asked.

"The immediate aim was to seize Mongolian territory beyond the Khalkhin Gol and then build a fortified line along the river to defend the second railway track of strategic importance to be built close to the boundary of our Trans-Baikal area west of the Chinese Eastern Railway."

"Now that you have combat experience," Stalin said, "take upon yourself the command of the Kiev Military District and use this experience for training the troops."

While I was in the Mongolian People's Republic I had no chance of making a detailed study of the military operations between Germany and the Anglo-French bloc. I decided to use this opportunity to ask:

"How should one understand the extremely passive nature of the war in the West, and what turn might one expect the further events to take?"

Stalin chuckled, and said:

"The French Government headed by Daladier and the Chamberlain Government in Britain have no intention of getting seriously involved in the war with Hitler. They still hope to be able to persuade Hitler to start a war against the Soviet Union. They refused to form an anti-Hitler bloc with us in 1939, because they did not want to hamper Hitler in his aggression against the Soviet Union. But nothing will come of it. They will have to pay a high price for their short-sighted policy."

After returning to the Moskva Hotel where I was staying, I was a long time dropping off to sleep because I was mulling over this conversation.

Stalin's appearance, his soft voice, the depth and concreteness of his judgement, his knowledge of military matters, the attention with which he listened to my report — all this had impressed me deeply.

## Chapter 8

# IN COMMAND OF KIEV SPECIAL MILITARY DISTRICT

I regarded it a great honour to be put in charge of the biggest military district in the country and did my utmost to prove worthy of the trust put in me by the Central Committee of the Party and the Government.

The Kiev Special Military District was a first-rate military organization. During my tour of duty with the Byelorussian Military District from 1922 to 1939 we "Byelorussians" had always looked up to the troops of the Kiev District and had a very high opinion of their combat training and of the strategic and tactical proficiency of their field and staff officers.

I was gratified to learn that I would be serving with experienced troop commanders and political officers. Many of them I knew personally, many I had heard about from other officers and generals, and with some I had worked together for years.

The Chief of Staff of the Kiev Special Military District at the time was Lieutenant-General M. A. Purkayev. I had worked with him in the Byelorussian Military District, where he had served as Chief of Staff. He was an experienced and highly knowledgeable general, and indeed a staff officer of the highest order.

The District Chief of Arillery was General N. D. Yakovlev, an outstanding expert in guns and their uses in combat. Two armies were under the command of Generals I. N. Muzychenko and F. Ya. Kostenko with whom I had worked for a length of time in the 4th Don Cossack Division. The District Chief of Operations was Colonel P. N. Rubtsov whom I knew from the days in the central offices of the People's Commissariat for Defence. Rubtsov was soon to be replaced by Colonel I. Kh. Bagramyan, whom I knew to be an extremely profound,

coolheaded, diligent and competent officer. The District Chief of Supply turned out to be my old friend V. Ye. Belokoskov.

I particularly want to put in a good word for the District Chief of Aviation, General E. S. Ptukhin, a brilliant airman and commanding officer, as well as a devoted son of our Party and a considerate comrade.

In a short time I got to know other ranking officers of the District equally well. Among them were highly skilled and well educated men who performed their duties with great efficiency, punctuality and energy.

Having familiarized myself with the affairs in the District, I thought I should introduce myself to the secretaries of the Ukrainian Communist Party's Central Committee. I gave them an account of the rout of the 6th Japanese Army on the Khalkhin Gol and described some of my first impressions, requesting their cooperation in meeting the District's needs. They turned out to be most amenable and I was happy that everything was going so well.

Throughout June 1940, I visited almost all the units and formations in the District. Then, together with the staff of District Headquarters, we conducted a large-scale field tour with signal communications support to the Ternopol-Lvov-Vladimir Volynsky-Dubno area — exactly where the Germans struck their main blow of Operation Barbarossa in the Ukraine a year later, in 1941.

The exercise proved that the armies, formations and staffs were commanded by highly capable young officers and generals. True, since they had only recently been promoted from less important duties, they did need some serious operational and tactical training. This point was taken up by the higher echelons of command.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1940 the troops of the Kiev Special Military District were engaged in intense combat training. They were drawing on the tactical experience the Red Army had gained in the war against Finland and in the battles with the Japanese on the Khalkhin Gol. Due account was also taken of the combat experience of the Nazi troops against several European states.

By that time, World War II was in full swing. At the end of 1936 Germany and Italy had concluded an agreement forming

the notorious Berlin-Rome axis, while Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact allegedly spearheaded against the Communist International. In actual fact, it united the aggressors in their drive for world supremacy. In 1937 Italy joined the Pact. At the same time Japan resumed the war to seize the whole of China. Austria ended its existence as an independent state in 1938. An armed attack on Czechoslovakia was in the offing. Appealing to peace-loving states, the Soviet Government declared: "It may be late tomorrow, but today there is still time for all states, particularly the great powers, to take a firm and unambiguous stand on the collective salvation of peace."

The Soviet proposals were not accepted.

At the ill-famed conference in Munich (September 29-30, 1938) Britain and France agreed to Germany's annexing the Sudeten region in order "to save peace at the last moment". The Czechoslovak delegation was waiting for the verdict on its country's future behind closed doors, while the USSR was debarred from the talks.

We were prepared to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia: our aviation and tanks were alerted; up to 40 divisions were massed in regions adjacent to the western border. But the Czechoslovak rulers of that time declined this aid and preferred abject surrender. On March 15, 1939, Germany occupied Prague. This was a natural consequence of the "appeasement" of Hitler.

Such a turn of affairs, repeatedly predicted by the Soviet Union, put Britain and France before the question of what they would do if Hitler, whom they had been pushing eastward would come out against the West? There began another round of talks, meetings and conferences to scare Hitler with the prospect of a possible military alliance with the USSR. While demanding a Soviet commitment of assistance in case of a German aggression, Daladier and Chamberlain did not wish to reciprocate by taking similar pledges themselves. The 1939 negotiations came to an impasse. The same can be said of the talks between the military missions of Britain, France, and the USSR.

In short, the situation in Europe at that time was characterized by pressures on the part of Hitler, and passivity on the part of Britain and France. The leaders of the capitalist states refused to support the numerous Soviet measures and proposals

designed to create an effective collective security system. This was only natural. The prevailing situation was made complex, conflicting and tragic by the desire of the British and French ruling circles to engineer a head-on clash between Germany and the USSR.

While bombs had not yet begun to explode in their own home, the class interests of the long-standing allies in the struggle against the first socialist state boiled down to one and the same thing — they kept bowing to Hitler. Daladier and Chamberlain still believed they would manage to outsmart everyone, to slip away in good time from the Nazi war machine poised for action, and, at the last moment to push it towards the Soviet Union.

Even after Germany had attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, her allies — Britain and France, having declared war on Germany, in fact did not lift a finger.

Chief of Staff of the High Command Operations Department, Alfred Jodl, admitted at the Nuremberg trial:

"If we did not collapse already in the year 1939 that was due only to the fact that during the Polish campaign, the approximately 110 French and British divisions in the West were held completely inactive against the 23 German divisions.

The landowners' government of Poland had declined the assistance offered by the Soviet Union. It had "sagaciously" erected defence zones and fortifications in the east, preparing for war with the Soviet Union, while Hitler's troops moved in from the west, north and south and swiftly seized the Polish munition depots. Despite the valiant struggle put up by Polish patriots, the German hordes closed in on the Polish army which found itself in a kind of enormous kettle. World War II gained in scale.

How did the Red Army look in those troublous times?

At the 18th Party Congress (March 1939) Marshal Voroshilov, People's Commissar for Defence, reported that compared with 1934 the Army had more than doubled its strength, and its motorization had increased 260 per cent. He cited summarized data relating to the fire power of a Soviet infantry corps, which were not below that of a corps in the German or French armies. The cavalry had grown by 50 per cent, and was considerably reinforced (35 per cent on average) with artillery, light and heavy machine-guns, and tanks. The tank pool had almost

doubled, and its fire capacity almost quadrupled. The effective range and rate of fire of the artillery, particularly those of anti-tank and tank guns, had increased. If back in 1934 the entire air fleet could lift 2,000 tons of bombs in one sortie, the payload in 1939 showed a 208 per cent increase. Fighters and even bombers could develop a speed of over 500 kilometres an hour.

In reporting to the Party's 18th Congress about the work of the Central Committee, J. V. Stalin commented on the threat of the new imperialist war. He said that our country, which constantly followed a policy of peace, was doing its utmost to enhance the fighting capacity of the Red Army and Navy. That was really so.

It often happens, by the way, that most important documents are ignored by our historical researchers. Sometimes the thoughts and judgements on prewar years obtained from indirect sources and through supplementary research sound as a revelation, while the same thoughts and even facts are contained in books easily available in libraries.

For instance, the records of the Party congresses of those years contain extensive historical data reflecting the tremendous work carried out by the Party and people in all areas of life. As a matter of fact, such documents are generally compiled not by individuals but by the hundreds and even thousands of specialists processing great quantities of data before providing a figure for a major report.

Of course, speaking at the Party's 18th Congress, the People's Commissar for Defence could not supply absolute figures describing the army's capability. But concrete data were revealed at the talks of the military missions of the USSR, Britain and France in August 1939 which, of course, were held secret. These talks are of great interest. They vividly reflect the serious approach and the sense of responsibility displayed by the Soviet Government in its bid to create a collective security system in Europe. They also show our earnest and realistic readiness to sacrifice a great deal for this end. The Soviet Government directly instructed its military envoys "to sign a military convention on questions of organizing a military defence of Britain, France and the USSR against aggression in Europe".

Britain and France, however, sent men of obscure rank to the negotiations with the sole aim of sounding out things and without a sincere interest in successful military cooperation. A secret letter-of-instructions to the British mission said in so many words that the British Government did not wish to assume any definite commitments that, would tie its hands. The mission was instructed to conduct the talks at a slow rate and show reserve in its dealings with the Russians. With regard to a military agreement, the mission was told to confine itself to vague definitions.

Below is an excerpt from the records of those times. It shows the combat capacity of the Soviet Army ready for deployment along our western frontiers. It also reveals the hostile designs of the Western powers, which were set on letting Hitler know that the British and French would not interfere if he marched East.

**Record of Meeting of Military Missions of the USSR, Britain and France on August 15, 1939**

*Meeting began at 10.07*
*Ended at 13:20*

...**Army Commander B. M. Shaposhnikov:** At the previous meetings we examined a plan for the disposition of the French armies in the West. In keeping with the request of the Military Missions of Britain and France, and on instructions of the USSR Military Mission, I will now present the plan of deployment of the Armed Forces of the USSR on its Western border. To counter aggression in Europe, the Red Army will deploy in the European part of the USSR and will dispose on the front: 120 infantry divisions, 16 cavalry divisions, 5,000 heavy guns and howitzers, from 9,000 to 10,000 tanks, and 5,000 to 5,500 bomber and fighter aircraft (excluding army cooperation aircraft).

These figures do not include garrisons of fortified areas, air defence troops, coast guards, depot units, and base area troops.

Without dwelling at length on the organization of the Red Army, I can say briefly that an infantry division consists

of three rifle and two artillery regiments. Its wartime strength is 19,000 men.

A corps consists of three infantry divisions, and has its own artillery — two regiments. (Admiral Draks addressing General Haywood asked if any of the officers were writing down Army Commander Shaposhnikov's communication and received an affirmative reply).

Armies of varied composition (from 5 to 8 corps each) have their own artillery, aviation and tanks. The garrisons of fortified areas can be brought to combat alert within 4 to 6 hours. The fortified areas stretch along the entire western frontier of the USSR, from the Arctic Ocean to the Black Sea.

An army can be concentrated within 8 to 20 days. The railway network not only permits to concentrate an army at the frontier within the indicated time, but also to carry out modifications of this concentration along the whole front. Along the western frontier we have 3 to 5 lateral lines of communication to a depth of 300 kilometres.

At present, we have a sufficient number of powerful steam-engines and large freight cars which have twice the capacity we had before. Our trains carry loads that are twice as heavy as they were. The speed of the trains has been increased.

We have a sizable pool of lorries and cars, and lateral roads which make it possible to deploy troops by motor vehicles along the whole length of the front...

...Now I will present three alternative plans approved by the USSR Military Mission for possible joint action by the armed forces of Britain, France and the USSR in case of aggression in Europe.

The first alternative is intended if the aggressor bloc attacks Britain and France. In that case the USSR will engage the equivalent of 70 per cent of the armed forces directly engaged by Britain and France against the chief aggressor — Germany. Let me explain. For instance, if France and Britain deploy against Germany 90 infantry divisions, the USSR will deploy 63 infantry divisions and 6 cavalry divisions with a corresponding force of artillery, tanks and aircraft, in round figures about two million men...

...The Northern Fleet of the USSR, together with an Anglo-French squadron will cruise along the coasts of Finland and

Norway outside their territorial waters. The USSR Baltic Fleet can extend its cruiser operations and submarine actions, and lay mines off the shores of East Prussia and Pomerania. Our submarines will prevent the shipment of industrial raw materials from Sweden to the chief aggressor.

(As Army Commander B. M. Shaposhnikov reports on the plan of action, Admiral Draks and General Haywood plot the situation on their sketch-maps.)

The second alternative plan is intended if the aggression is directed against Poland and Romania...

...The Soviet Union can participate in the war only if France and Britain arrange with Poland and, if possible, Lithuania, as well as Romania, to let Soviet troops pass through the Vilna gap, in Galicia, and in Romania, and to permit operations in that area.

In that case, the USSR commits the equivalent of 100 per cent of the armed forces committed by Britain and France directly against Germany. For instance, if France and Britain commit against Germany 90 infantry divisions, the USSR will likewise commit 90 infantry divisions and 12 cavalry divisions with corresponding artillery, aviation and tanks.

The tasks of the British and French fleets remain the same as in the first alternative...

...In the South, the Black Sea Fleet of the USSR, having closed the mouth of the Danube against the exit of submarines and other naval forces of the aggressors, will close the Bosporus to stop entry into the Black Sea of hostile surface vessels and submarines.

The third alternative plan. This plan provides for a situation in which the chief aggressor, using the territory of Finland, Estonia and Latvia, directs his attacks against the USSR. In this case France and Britain should immediately enter the war against the aggressor or bloc of aggressors. Poland, bound by agreements with Britain and France, must enter the war against Germany and grant rights of passage to Soviet troops through the Vilna gap and into Galicia in keeping with the British and French Governments' understanding with the Polish Government.

As mentioned above, the USSR deploys 120 infantry divisions, 16 cavalry divisions, 5,000 heavy guns and howitzers,

from 9,000 to 10,000 tanks, and 5,000 to 5,500 aircraft. France and Britain should, in this case, engage the equivalent of 70 per cent of the above-mentioned Soviet force and immediately begin active operations against the chief aggressor.

The Anglo-French fleets should operate as indicated in the first alternative plan.

## Record of Meeting of Military Missions of the USSR, Britain and France on August 17, 1939

Meeting began at 10:07
Ended at 13:43

Marshal K. Ye. Voroshilov (presiding): I declare the meeting of the military missions open. Today we have before us a statement on the Soviet air force. If there are no questions, I will give the floor to Army Commander 2nd Class Loktionov, Air Force Chief of the Red Army.

Army Commander A. D. Loktionov: Army Commander 1st Class Shaposhnikov, Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, said in his report here that in the West European theatre the Red Army would deploy 5,000 to 5,500 combat planes. This number represents first-line aviation and does not include reserves.

Out of this figure 80 per cent are modern aircraft with the following velocities: fighters — 465-575 km per hour and more, bombers — 460-550 km per hour. The range of bombers — 1,800-4,000 km. Bomb load — from 600 kg for old models to 2,500 kg...

The ratio of bombers to fighters and army aviation is: bombers —55 per cent, fighters —40 per cent, army —5 per cent.

Soviet aircraft plants are operating on a one-shift schedule at present and only a few on a two-shift schedule. They turn out an average 900 to 950 combat aircraft monthly, not counting civil and training aircraft.

In view of the increasing aggression in Europe and in the East, our aircraft industry has taken steps to expand its output to the limit that will meet the needs of war...

The main air units can be alerted within 1 to 4 hours. Duty units are on constant ground alert.

In the opening stage of hostilities, air force operations will correspond to plans worked out by the General Staff. The general principle of air-force actions is determined by the need to concentrate all forces — ground and air — in the direction of the main effort. Consequently, the air force operates in close conjunction with ground forces in the battlefield and throughout the operational depth.

The bombers will attack enemy manpower and major military objectives. Besides, bombers will hit military targets in the deep enemy rear. Soviet aviation never sets itself the aim of bombing civilians.

Apart from protecting major military objectives, rail and motor roads, fighters have the tasks of covering the concentration of ground troops and aviation, defending cities in close conjunction with other anti-aircraft defence facilities, of engaging enemy aircraft, and securing the operation of bombers and attack aircraft on the battlefield in close cooperation with them...

Marshal K. Ye. Voroshilov: Marshal Bernet has the floor.

Marshal Bernet: On behalf of the French and British missions, I should like to thank General Loktionov for his accurate report. I am greatly impressed by the energy and organized manner which enabled the Soviet Union to achieve such outstanding results in creating its aviation...

Historians and writers of memoirs are fond of asking: "What would have happened if...?" Indeed, if the governments of Britain and France had agreed to join hands with the Soviet Union against the aggressor in 1939, as we suggested, the destiny of Europe would have been different.

The Politbureau meeting of March 1940 was of great importance for the further development of our armed forces. It reviewed the results of the war with Finland. Discussions were sharp. The system of combat training and education was strongly criticized. The question was raised of considerably increasing the fighting capacity of the army and navy.

An enlarged conference of the Chief Military Council was convened on the recommendation of the Politbureau in mid-April 1940. Veterans of the war with Finland, and ranking

officers of the central, district, and army commands were invited to attend. The conference helped to define the basic principles of organizing combat training to suit the obtaining situation. The Party's Central Committee and the Government instructed a special commission headed by A. A. Zhdanov and N. A. Voznesensky to inspect the work of the People's Commissariat for Defence. The commission demanded that the central military establishment put in more effort to strengthen the army, air force and navy. On the basis of the instructions of the Party's Central Committee and the recommendations of the Chief Military Council the People's Commissar for Defence issued a specific order on combat and political training of troops during the summer of 1940.

What was the essence of the requirements that our Party and Government set the armed forces in the middle of 1940?

Taking into account the results of the Soviet-Finnish conflict and particularly the nature of the combat operations in the already ongoing world war, the urgent and far-reaching task was set for the troops to learn today what they will need in war tomorrow. A reorganization began of all services and arms. Important measures were taken to back up one-man leadership, and to tighten order and discipline in the army.

By order of the People's Commissar for Defence, commanders and chiefs at all levels, as well as staffs, were required to align the system of combat training and education with what the war would require of the troops. Training of the troops was to be brought closer to combat situations; personnel were to be trained to cope with lengthy physical strain. Tactical drill was to be held by day and night, in any weather, so as to be able to profit from the surprise factor and always be in a state of combat readiness.

The order required infantry commanders to study and know the possibilities and specificity of the other arms in order to maintain close cooperation with them in all types of modern warfare.

All through that summer, Member of the District Military Council Vladimir Borisov and I were in the field with officers of the combat training and operations divisions. Major attention was devoted to the field training of commanding officers, staffs and troops of all arms of the service.

Appointed People's Commissar for Defence on May 8, 1940, Timoshenko came to the District to inspect the troops in September.

From September 22 to 24 there was a tactical review of the 41st Rifle Division in the area of Rava-Russkaya. It was a two-sided field exercise with air force participation. The 41st Division's artillery made a particularly good showing.

From September 25 to 27 review exercises were also held in the 99th Division. The division came up with excellent results and was awarded a Red Banner. The division's artillery won the challenge Red Banner of the Red Army Artillery.

From September 27 to October 4 field exercises were held for the staffs of the 37th Rifle Corps, the 6th Rifle Corps, the 36th Tank Brigade and the 97th Rifle Division. The staffs were well organized and displayed good initiatives, providing the field command with the opportunity to exercise continuous control of the troops in complicated and swiftly changing situations.

For its excellent results, the staff of the 37th Rifle Corps was awarded the challenge Red Banner of the Red Army's General Staff, while Corps Commander Kondrusev and Chief of Staff Mendrov were presented gold watches. Special gifts were made to many officers.

Less than a year later, the 37th Rifle Corps, like the 41st, 99th and 97th Rifle divisions, had had to come to grips with crack Nazi troops. The officers and men of all units displayed great courage during those first and most arduous days of the war.

It should be pointed out that review exercises in the presence of high-ranking military commanders were immensely instructive and had a powerful mobilizing effect. S. K. Timoshenko was very well versed in the combat training of individual soldiers and units, both big and small — indeed it was something he enjoyed very much. With his appointment as People's Commissar for Defence battle training was put on the right lines. The prime objective, as called for by the Party, was to teach officers and men all that they would need in actual war. We began to devote particular attention to reconnaissance and effective use of terrain in both offensive and defensive operations.

We would tirelessly impress upon officers and men the idea that a unit could be a formidable fighting force only if its entire personnel was well trained. I have feelings of respect for the District's Political Propaganda Department Chief, Divisional Commissar Yefim Pozhidayev, who made a very useful contribution to the education of the troops.

I have described but one review conducted by Commissar for Defence Timoshenko in the District. Actually, many such exercises were held by the District command throughout 1940, and it is therefore no accident that in the first days of the war the troops of the South-Western Front fought skilfully and bravely, and dealt the enemy some very telling blows.

Towards the end of September 1940 the General Staff notified us that a conference of the top echelons of the Army Command would be held on the instructions of the Central Committee of the Party in December in Moscow. I was to prepare to speak on the nature of modern offensive operations. A large-scale strategic war game was also planned, and I was supposed to play for the "blue" side. The Commissar for Defence ordered me to present the draft of my report by November 1.

Owing to the complexity of my topic and the extremely high level of the conference I spent a whole month working on the report many hours a day. Valuable assistance was rendered me by the District Chief of Operations, Ivan Bagramyan.

By the appointed time the draft was presented to the People's Commissar. A couple of weeks later Chief of General Staff K. A. Meretskov phoned to tell me the draft had been approved by my superiors and that I should therefore stand by to deliver the report.

The conference was held in late December 1940. It was attended by the commanding officers of districts and armies, members of military councils, and chiefs of staff of districts and armies, commanding officers of all military academies, professors and doctors of military science, inspectors of all arms, chiefs of central departments and ranking officers of the General Staff. Throughout its deliberations the conference was also attended by members of the Party's Politbureau.

The conference heard several important reports. Army General I. V. Tyulenev prepared a comprehensive report on the

nature of modern defence, but in keeping with instructions he did not transcend the limits of defence on an army scale, and therefore did not discuss the nature of modern strategic defence.

A report entitled "The Air Force in an Offensive and in the Fight for Air Control" was made by Air Force Commander Lieutenant-General P. V. Rychagov, who had distinguished himself in Spain. It was an exceedingly profound paper.

Lieutenant-General A. K. Smirnov's report was entitled "A Rifle Division on the Offensive and on the Defensive".

A general report on the combat and operational training of Red Army troops was made by Chief of General Staff General of the Army K. A. Meretskov. He took special note of the inadequate training standards of senior commanding officers and staffs of all levels. This was the aftermath of the mass promotion to ranking commands of young officers who were still insufficiently proficient in tactical, operational and staff work.

Universal interest was aroused by the report of Colonel-General D. G. Pavlov, Commander of the Western Special Military District, on the employment of mechanized formations in a modern offensive. That was a new and most important topic. In his well-argued paper, Pavlov skilfully revealed the high mobility and battering force of tank and mechanized units as well as their lesser vulnerability in the face of enemy artillery and air strikes as compared to other arms of the service.

My paper on the nature of modern offensive operations was also favourably received. The audience made several valuable observations and some critical remarks.

All who took part in the debate and the People's Commissar for Defence who summed it up were of the opinion that if a war was unleashed against the Soviet Union by Nazi Germany, we would have to deal with the most powerful army in the West. The conference emphasized that the German army had many armoured and mechanized troops and a formidable air force, and that its generals had had much first-hand experience in organizing and conducting modern warfare.

All who spoke at the conference acknowledged the vital and urgent need for us to continue forming tank and mechanized forces on the division and corps scale so as to equal the

strength of the German army. There was a great deal said about reorganizing and rearming the air force and the anti-aircraft and anti-tank troops and about the need to switch artillery to mechanized traction so as to heighten its mobility and cross-country ability.

On the whole, the conference showed that Soviet military thinking had essentially spotted the chief trends in modern warcraft. Now it had all to be translated into army combat practice as quickly as possible. After a while, on the basis of the conclusions of the conference, further measures were taken to boost the combat readiness of frontier troops and to improve staff performance. In the military districts, there was another round of large-scale strategic operational manoeuvres and drills; a plan for protecting state borders was being worked out and organization standards for troops were being raised.

The day after the conference we were supposed to have a large-scale war game, but unexpectedly we were summoned by Stalin.

He received us rather coldly, greeted us with a faint nod and motioned us to seat ourselves round the table.

He reprimanded Timoshenko for closing the conference without having inquired about his opinion concerning the closing remarks. Timoshenko replied that he had sent him the draft and thought he had familiarized himself with it and had no comments.

"When is your war game due to start?" Stalin inquired.

"Tomorrow morning," said Timoshenko.

"Very well, go ahead with it, but afterwards don't dismiss the field commanders. Who is playing for the 'blue' side and who for the 'red'?" continued Stalin.

"General of the Army Zhukov is playing for the 'blue' (western) side, and Colonel-General Pavlov for the 'red' (eastern) side."

Next morning we commenced our large-scale war game. The strategic situation was based on probable developments in the western frontier zone in the event of a German attack on the Soviet Union.

The game was conducted under the general control of Commissar for Defence S. K. Timoshenko and Chief of General Staff K. A. Meretskov. They also took a hand in the "action"

in the south-western strategic direction. The "blue" side (the Germans) was assumed to be the attacker, the "red" side (the Red Army) was the defender.

Basically, the strategic war game had the aim of checking the practicability and expediency of the main provisions laid down in the plan for cover and action by the troops in the initial period of the war.

Credit is due to our General Staff for its effort: all the material it had prepared for the game largely reflected the latest operations of the Nazi troops in Europe.

In the western strategic direction the game embraced a front running from East Prussia to Polesye. The general composition of the front was as follows: western ("blue") side — over 60 divisions; eastern ("red") side — over 50 divisions. The land forces were given powerful air support.

The game abounded in dramatic situations for the eastern side. They proved to be in many ways similar to what really happened after June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union.

After the game was over, the People's Commissar for Defence ordered the commanding officers of both sides, Pavlov and myself, to make a partial analysis and indicate both the shortcomings and the positive aspects in the actions of the participants.

A general summing up and analysis had been ordered by Stalin to be held in the Kremlin in the presence of top-ranking officials of the Commissariat for Defence and the General Staff, the district commanders and their chiefs of staff, Stalin, and other Politbureau members.

The progress of the game was reported by General of the Army K. A. Meretskov, Chief of General Staff. When he cited figures on the balance of forces of the two sides and on the superiority of the "blues" in the initial period, particularly in tanks and aircraft, Stalin, obviously irked by the poor showing of the "reds", cut him short and said:

"Don't forget that it's not only the arithmetical majority but the skill of commanders and troops that matters in battle."

After several more remarks, Stalin asked:

"Has anyone anything to say?"

People's Commissar Timoshenko spoke. He emphasized the

growing operational and tactical progress of the commanding officers and chiefs of staff of military districts, and the unquestionable usefulness of the recently concluded conference and war game.

"In 1941," Timoshenko pointed out, "the troops would have possibilities to train still more purposefully and with better organization since by that time they would have settled down in their newly appointed locations."

Colonel-General Pavlov spoke next. He started out by evaluating the conference.

"What are the causes of the unsuccessful actions of the 'red' side?" Stalin asked.

Pavlov tried to get off with a joke, saying that these things happen in war games. Stalin was not amused.

"The officer commanding a district must be an expert, and must find correct solutions in any conditions, which is what you failed to do in this game." Then Stalin asked again: "Does somebody else wish to speak?"

I asked for the floor.

Noting the considerable value of such games for raising the strategic and operational skills of high-ranking commanders, I suggested they should be held more often despite the difficulty of organizing them. To improve the competence of district commanders, their staff officers, and army commanders, I suggested "holding periodic command and staff field exercises with the employment of communications facilities under the general guidance of the Commissar for Defence and the General Staff".

I then referred to the construction of fortified areas in Byelorussia.

"In my view fortified zones in Byelorussia are being built too close to the frontier, and have an extremely disadvantageous operational configuration, particularly in the area of the Belostok bulge. This will enable enemy forces to strike from the Brest and Suwalki area at the rear of our Belostok group. Furthermore, due to inadequate depth the fortified zones cannot expect to hold out for long as they are completely vulnerable to artillery fire. I hold that the fortified zones should be built farther from the border."

"Are the fortified zones correctly sited in the Ukraine

then?" asked Pavlov, evidently annoyed by my criticism of his district.

"I was not the one who located the fortified zones in the Ukraine, but I do think that there, too, they should be farther away from the border."

"Fortified zones are built according to the approved plans of the Chief Military Council and the actual control over their construction is in the hands of Deputy Defence Commissar Marshal Shaposhnikov," K. Ye. Voroshilov objected crisply.

Seeing that an argument was about to break out, I stopped short and sat down.

A few other generals spoke on a number of controversial issues.

Some very pertinent comments were offered by the Air Force Commander-in-Chief General P. V. Rychagov. He insisted on the need for urgent introduction in our Air Force of the latest types of aircraft and felt it was essential to improve pilots' combat training.

A strange impression was made by the remarks of Deputy Defence Commissar for Armaments, Marshal G. I. Kulik. He suggested increasing the strength of a regular rifle division to 16,000-18,000 men and advocated developing horse-drawn artillery. Addressing himself to the experience in Spain, he concluded that tank units should act mainly as direct support for the infantry and solely on a company and battalion scale.

"For the time being," continued Kulik, "we should refrain from forming tank and mechanized corps."

At this point People's Commissar for Defence Timoshenko broke in to remark:

"The Army Command is fully aware of the need for the prompt mechanization of the armed forces. Kulik is the only man who is still confused in these matters."

Stalin ended the discussion with a comment on Kulik's obsolete views.

"Victory in war," he pointed out, "will be won by the side that has more tanks and more highly motorized troops."

The following day I was summoned by Stalin.

After a word of greeting, Stalin said:

"The Politbureau has decided to relieve Meretskov of the duties of Chief of General Staff and to appoint you in his place."

I had been expecting anything but this, and did not know what to say. Then I replied:

"I have never been on any staff before. I have always been in the field. I cannot be Chief of General Staff."

"The Politbureau has decided to appoint you," Stalin said, laying special emphasis on the word "decided".

Seeing that objections were pointless, I offered my thanks for the trust placed in me, and added:

"But if I don't make a good Chief of General Staff, I shall ask to be transferred back to the field."

"That's a deal. The Central Committee's decision will be issued toworrow," Stalin concluded.

A quarter of an hour later I was in the Defence Commissar's office. Smiling broadly, he told me:

"I know how you tried to refuse the post of Chief of General Staff. I just had a phone call from Stalin. You may return to your District now, but come back to Moscow as soon as possible. You will be replaced as Commander of the District by Colonel-General M. P. Kirponos. But don't wait till he comes. You can leave District Chief of Staff Purkayev to look after things for the time being."

I had never served with Mikhail Kirponos, but judging by what those who had said of him he was a highly experienced army general who had served in the old, prerevolutionary army. During the February revolution of 1917 he had been elected chairman of the Regimental Soldiers' Committee. In May 1918 he joined the Party. From 1934 to 1939 he had been chief of the Kazan Rifle School. For meritorious service as commander of the 70th Infantry Division in action he had been conferred the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. In June 1940, Kirponos was appointed Commander of the Leningrad Military District.

I was pleased that the Kiev Special Military District was entrusted to such a worthy commander. Naturally, like many others, he still lacked the knowledge and experience essential to command such a big frontier district, but nonetheless his past experience, industriousness and resourcefulness were a guarantee that Kirponos would be a first-class field commander.

I left for Kiev the same night, to be back in Moscow as soon as possible. To be frank, I was leaving with a heavy heart.

I had always liked the Ukraine and the beautiful old city of Kiev. The Ukrainian people had given me their trust and had honoured me by electing me to the Supreme Soviet of the Ukraine and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The Ukrainian Party's Central Committee had given vigorous assistance to the troops of the District in organizing our field training and instruction, and saw to the welfare of the troops.

During my brief tour of duty as District Commander I had come to know and to admire the diligence and initiative of the District Command, particularly I. Kh. Bagramyan, E. S. Ptukhin, N. D. Yakovlev, and the army, corps and divisional commanders. I had profound trust in these men and felt that if the hour of battle should strike, they could well be relied upon. And later events proved that I was not mistaken.

I had many phone calls from the People's Commissar for Defence, urging me to wind up my affairs in the District more expeditiously.

I did not stay long in Kiev. On January 31, I was already in Moscow. The day after, having taken over K. A. Meretskov's duties, I became Chief of General Staff.

## Chapter 9

# EVE OF THE WAR

All through February I was busy studying matters directly relating to the General Staff. I worked 15 or 16 hours a day, often sleeping in my office. I cannot say that I managed overnight to become familiar with the many-sided activity of the General Staff. It came to me gradually. I was greatly assisted by N. F. Vatutin, G. K. Malandin, A. M. Vasilevsky, V. D. Ivanov, A. I. Shimonayev, N. I. Chetverikov, and other members of the General Staff.

What had we achieved by the beginning of the war? Was the country, its armed forces, ready to stand up to the enemy?

An exhaustive answer to that major question with the due account for its political, economic, military and social aspects, and all objective and subjective factors, requires extensive research. I am sure that our historians will handle the task well.

For my part, I am ready to speak primarily on the military side of the matter, reconstructing as best as I can the general state of affairs, and outlining the events in those trying days and months of the first half of 1941.

Let's take first things first — the economy and industry which is the basis of the country's defensive capability.

The third five-year plan (1938-1942) was a logical follow-up of the first and second plans. The first two plans were more than fulfilled. Speaking of industrial output, it doubled after four years of the first five-year plan, while the increase of 110 per cent envisaged for the second five-year plan period actually came to 120 per cent. Then the 18th Congress of the Communist Party set the industrial increase for the next five years at 90 per cent. Were there grounds to consider that target unrealistic? None whatever.

By June 1941 gross industrial output was 86 per cent, and rail freight turnover 90 per cent of the level planned for the end of 1942. Some 2,900 factories, power stations, mines and other industrial enterprises had been built and started up.

Under the third five-year plan capital investments in building new and modernizing old enterprises came to 182,000 million roubles, whereas similar investments during the first five-year plan period were 39,000 million, and 103,000 million during the second. It follows, with due account of the increased construction costs in the past few years, that more production capacities were being put into operation that had been commissioned during the first and second five-year plan periods combined.

And how were things with heavy industry, and in particular with the defence industry? The report to the 18th Congress of the Communist Party on the next plan of economic development stressed that when carrying out the previous plans substantial changes had had to be made in targets for heavy industry because of the deterioration of the world situation. For one, the envisaged rate of growth for the defence industry had to be stepped up considerably. Under the third five-year plan, heavy and defence industries continued rapid advance.

While total industrial output grew by an average of 13 per cent, that of the defence industry increased 39 per cent. A number of engineering and other large plants were converted for the production of defence equipment. Construction was underway of large specialized munition plants.

The Party's Central Co

One should remember, however, that this giant growth was largely attained, in the first place, through the exceptionally hard work of the masses, and in the second — through the growth of the light industry and other industries directly concerned with supplying people with foodstuffs and manufactured goods. It is equally important to remember that the growth of the heavy and defence industries was taking place in a peacetime economy of a peaceful — not militarized — state.

Therefore, greater emphasis on that aspect would actually have meant passing from peaceful to military development, leading to a degeneration of the very nature of the national economy — its militarization to the detriment of the working people's interests.

Naturally, from the vantage point of postwar it is easy to say that we should have relied more on this or that type of weapon and less on another. But even so one cannot say that some cardinal, nationwide economic changes had been necessary before the war. I can even go farther. Recalling what we military leaders had demanded of industry in the last few months of peace, I can see that we did not always take full stock of the country's economic possibilities. Although, perhaps, from our departmental point of view, so to say, we were right.

For instance, there were objective factors limiting the proposals of the People's Commissar for Defence for increasing the mass production of the latest types of aircraft, tanks, artillery tractors, lorries, and communications and other equipment.

Of course, in industry and defence production there had been many shortcomings and difficulties, which I will mention later. The tremendous scope of construction caused a shortage of skilled labour; experience was wanting in the mass production of new types of weapons, while the demand for arms and equipment was growing from day to day.

The procedure of adopting new types of weaponry for mass production was as follows:

First, models underwent factory tests in the presence of army representatives. Then service tests followed. Only after that the People's Commissariat for Defence passed judgement. Then the Government with the Commissar for Defence, the

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The Party's Central Committee assisted enterprises producing new weaponry for the armed forces to obtain raw materials that were in short supply, and the latest equipment.

Experienced Party workers and prominent experts were assigned to the larger defence enterprises as CC Party organizers to help the plants get everything they needed and to ensure attainment of targets. I must say that Stalin himself worked much with defence enterprises — he was personally acquainted with dozens of plant directors, Party organizers, and chief engineers; he met with them, demanding fulfilment of plans with his typical persistence.

Thus, we had a steady and rapid, I would even say all-out growth of the defence industry.

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Commissars of the defence industries and the chief designers, considered the new models and made a final decision.

All that was time-consuming. Sometimes a new weapon was being manufactured and tested when designers came up with a still better model and, quite logically, adoption of the earlier model was put off until the latest one was properly tested.

On the whole, the tremendous production capacities built during the two prewar five-year periods, and especially in the three years preceding the war, provided a sound basis for the country's defence capability.

Highly important from the military standpoint was the Party line for accelerated industrial development of the eastern regions and creation of back-up enterprises for the engineering, oil-refining, and chemical industries. Under construction in the east were three-quarters of the total number of new blast-furnaces, a second large oil base between the Volga and the Urals, iron-and-steel plants in the Urals, beyond Lake Baikal and on the Amur, major enterprises of the non-ferrous metal industry in Central Asia, and auto assembly works, large aluminium plants, rolling mills, and hydropower stations in the Soviet Far East. During the war, having absorbed enterprises evacuated from the west, the eastern regions formed the industrial base for repulsing and defeating the enemy.

I should like to say a few words about the material reserves amassed on the eve of the war to ensure the regearing of the economy along military lines and supplying troops with provisions until the economy began meeting war needs. Between 1940 and June 1941, the national material reserves grew in terms of value from 4,000 million roubles to 7,600 million roubles.

These reserves included: plant, fuel, raw materials, power, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, and foodstuffs. Although rather modest, these reserves accumulated on the eve of the war helped the national economy to build up the rate and scope necessary for successful prosecution of the war despite the hardships of 1941.

The heart of heavy industry and of the defence industry beat quickly. In the years and months before the war their development was intense and fast. Life in the country as a whole was becoming more orderly, as it were.

The 4th Extraordinary Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet in September 1939 passed the Law on Universal Military Service. Now all persons of 19 and over were conscripted for service in the armed forces; for persons who had finished secondary school the call-up age was set at 18. To give better military training, the term of active service was increased: for junior commanders of the infantry and air force from two years to three; for all men in the air force, as well as for men and junior commanders in the border guards — to four years; for men on ships and other naval units — to five years.

Fulfilment of the third five-year plan as a whole, and reaching the heavy industry and defence industry targets in particular, like the threat of an armed assault on the USSR called for more working time to be put into the country's economic development. Therefore, on June 26, 1940, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet issued a decree putting the country on an eight-hour work day and a six-day working week, and forbade industrial and office workers to give up their jobs without official permission. A new system of training skilled labour was introduced in vocational schools, railwaymen's schools, and factory schools. These schools trained from 800,000 to one million persons a year. Also in the middle of 1940, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet published a decree on responsibility for defective industrial output and for industrial enterprises deviating from established standards. Strict measures were introduced to improve management of enterprises, tighten discipline, and heighten responsibility and order.

The state machinery and industrial management, too, underwent profound changes, becoming more flexible, less cumbersome and less centralized. The People's Commissariat of the Defence Industry was broken down into four commissariats: of the aircraft industry, the shipbuilding industry, ammunition, and armaments. The People's Commissariat of Engineering was divided into commissariats of heavy, medium and general engineering.

New people's commissariats were established (of motor transport, construction, etc.), which directly contributed to strengthening the country's defences. The Economic Council of the USSR Council of People's Commissars was restructured into economic councils for the defence industry, iron-and-steel,

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The Red Army General Staff was successively headed by A. I. Yegorov from 1931, Marshal of the Soviet Union B. M. Shaposhnikov from 1937, and General of the Army K. A. Meretskov (from August 1940 to February 1941).

Now let's see what our armed forces were like, on the eve of the war. For the reader's convenience and to facilitate conclusions, the narrative will be arranged in the following pattern: what had already been done by the people, Party and Government; what we intended to accomplish in the immediate future, and what we did not have time to do or did not succeed in doing. Of course, in general terms only, with only a small quantity of facts.

Infantry. In April 1941 the infantry was brought up to wartime strength. An infantry or rifle division, the main all-arms unit of the Red Army, comprised three infantry and two artillery regiments, one anti-tank and one anti-aircraft artillery battalion, a reconnaissance and an engineer battalion, a signals battalion, logistical and other rear units and establishments. At wartime strength an infantry (rifle) division was supposed to have about 14,500 officers and men, 78 field guns, fifty-four 45-mm anti-tank guns, 12 anti-aircraft guns,

fuel, engineering and other industries. Prominent statesmen were appointed chairmen of these councils, including Deputy Chairmen of the USSR Council of People's Commissars N. A. Voznesensky, A. N. Kosygin and V. A. Malyshev.

All these changes were necessitated by the immensely increased amount of work, and the preparations for active defence against aggression whose likelihood increased from month to month.

In the obtaining situation, and because of the new Law on Universal Military Service, the central military establishment and the local military agencies were also reorganized. Military commissariats were established in the autonomous republics, territories and regions, and new regulations were issued to govern their functions.

Cardinal questions were considered at the People's Commissariat for Defence by the Red Army's Chief Military Council. The Commissar for Defence was its Chairman, and his deputies and a member of the Politbureau of the Party's Central Committee were its members. Especially important problems were usually considered in the presence of Stalin and other members of the Central Committee's Politbureau.

The Central Committee and the Government specified the distribution of responsibilities within the USSR People's Commissariat for Defence in a decision dated March 8, 1941.

Guidance of the Red Army was by the Commissar for Defence through the General Staff, his deputies, and a system of chief and central divisions. He was also directly in charge of the Chief Motor-Armour Division, the Administrative Department, the Finance Division, the Personnel Division, and the Design Bureau.

Prior to the war responsibilities within the People's Commissariat for Defence were distributed as follows:

The Communications Division, Fuel Supply Division, Chief Division of Air Defence, the Academy of the General Staff and the M. V. Frunze Academy — General of the Army G. K. Zhukov, Deputy People's Commissar and Chief of General Staff;

The Chief Supplies Division, Medical and Veterinary Divisions, and the Material Stocks Department — Marshal of the Soviet Union S. M. Budenny, First Deputy People's Commissar for Defence;

The Chief Artillery Division, Chemical Defence Division, and the Artillery Academy — Marshal of the Soviet Union G. I. Kulik, Deputy Defence Commissar for Artillery;

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sixty-six 82-120-mm mortars, 16 light tanks, 13 armoured cars, and over 3,000 horses. So manned and equipped, the infantry divisions were sufficiently mobile and formidable fighting units.

In 1939, 1940, and the first six months of 1941, the troops were supplied over 105,000 light, mounted, and large-calibre machine guns, and over 100,000 sub-machine guns. And that despite a slight drop in the output of small arms and artillery pieces because we were winding up the production of outdated types of arms, while new types could not be so quickly put into batch production due to their complexity and peculiarities of design.

In mid-March 1941, S. K. Timoshenko and I asked Stalin's permission to call up the inductible reserve personnel so as to update their military training in infantry divisions. At first our request was declined. We were told that calling up reservists on such a scale might give the Germans an excuse to provoke a war. At the end of March, however, we were allowed to call up 500,000 men and non-coms, and send them to border militar[y] districts to augment infantry divisions there, bringing up th[e] strength of each to at least 8,000.

To dispose of this subject, let me just say that another 300,000 were called up a few days later so as to man the fortified areas with specialists, as well as to augment other arms and services, the High Command Reserve artillery, engineers, signals, air defences, and Air Force logistical services. In sum, the Red Army got an additional nearly 800,000 men on the eve of the war. Their training was planned for May-October 1941.

As a result, on the eve of the war, out of the 170 divisions and two brigades in the border military districts 19 divisions had between 5,000 and 6,000 men; the average strength of each of the seven cavalry divisions was 6,000 and 144 division[s] had 8,000 to 9,000 men each. In interior military districts most divisions were undermanned while many were just being activated and were beginning their combat training.

**Armour.** I have already mentioned the high development rate of the Soviet tank-building industry, and the high quality of Soviet-made tanks. By 1938 the output of tanks more than

trebled as compared with that of the early thirties. In view of new national defence needs, the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Government set the designers and tank-builders the task of developing tanks with thicker armour and greater fire-power, but highly mobile and reliable.

A team of talented designers under Zh. Y. Kotin developed the KV heavy tank, and another team under M. I. Koshkin, A. A. Morozov and N. A. Kucherenko developed the famous T-34 medium tank. Engine-builders created the powerful V-2 diesel engine for tanks. The KV and T-34 were the best tanks built before the war. And during the war they maintained their superiority over similar types of enemy tanks. The task on the eve of the war, however, was to organize their mass production as soon as possible.

The Defence Committee studied the situation in the tank industry on the Central Committee's direction and reported that some of the plants did not fulfill production targets, had difficulties in adjusting production processes, and that the troops were getting the KV and T-34 tanks much too slowly. The Government adopted appropriate measures. The Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars passed exceptionally important decisions to organize mass production of tanks in the Volga area and in the Urals.

From January 1939 to June 22, 1941, the Red Army received over 7,000 tanks; in 1941 industry turned out about 5,500 tanks of all types. As to the KV and T-34 tanks, the plants managed to put out only 1,861 of them before the war, which was clearly insufficient. The new tanks began appearing in the tank schools and in the border military districts only in the latter half of 1940.

Insufficiency of battle-ready tanks combined with difficulties of an organizational nature. The reader knows, perhaps, that our army pioneered the organization of large mechanized formations — brigades and corps. However, the experience of their employment in the specific conditions of the war in Spain was assessed incorrectly and mechanized corps in our army were disbanded. And yet we had achieved much on the Khalkhin Gol, where we employed tank formations. Powerful armour formations were widely employed by Germany in her aggressions against European countries.

It was imperative to urgently raise large armour formations. In 1940 the activation of mechanized corps, tank and motorized divisions got underway. Nine mechanized corps were formed. In February 1941 the General Staff drafted a still broader plan under which the number of armour and mechanized units was to exceed the figures decreed by the Government in 1940.

Aware of the strength of the German armour, the People's Commissar for Defence and I requested that in raising mechanized corps, existing tank brigades, and even cavalry units on account of their mobility, be turned to use.

Stalin, who seemed not to have made up his mind on the matter yet, was undecided. Time went on, and only in March 1941 it was decided to activate the 20 mechanized corps we had asked for.

But we had failed to correctly estimate the capacity of our tank industry. We required 16,600 tanks of the latest types only, and altogether as many as 32,000 tanks to equip the new mechanized corps to full strength. Such numbers could not be produced in a year with the existing facilities. Technical and commanding personnel, too, was insufficient.

We managed to equip less than half the corps before the war broke out. And it was those very corps that essentially repelled the first enemy blows. The corps which at the outset of the war were still in the formative stage, were not ready until the time of the counter-offensive at Stalingrad, during which they proved decisive.

**Artillery.** Confirmed archive records show that between January 1, 1939 and June 22, 1941 the Red Army received 29,637 field guns and 52,407 mortars; the total number of artillery guns and mortars, including tank guns, amounted to 92,578. This equipment was mostly organic to the units in the field. Most of the border military districts were provided with artillery strictly according to the tables of organization.

Immediately before the war we had 60 howitzer and 14 artillery regiments in the High Command Reserve, which, considering the specifics of the war with Germany, was totally insufficient.

In the spring of 1941 we began to form 10 anti-tank artillery brigades but failed to man them to prescribed strength by June. Besides, artillery pieces had inadequate traction to manoeuvre off the roads, particularly in autumn and winter. And yet the anti-tank artillery brigades proved exceptionally effective. Sometimes they were the only reliable weapon against the massive panzer attacks of the enemy.

Marshal G. I. Kulik, who was Stalin's chief rapporteur on artillery questions, did not always furnish correct views on the efficiency of certain artillery and mortar systems.

Towards the outbreak of the war, he and the Chief Artillery Division failed to appreciate the importance of the mighty BM-13 (Katyushas) lorry-mounted multiple rocket launchers whose salvos put the enemy to flight in July 1941. The Defence Committee decided to launch their batch production only in June of that year.

Still our arms experts merit praise for their efficiency and diligence. They did all they could to furnish the troops with the first Katyushas in a matter of 10 to 15 days after the outbreak of war.

Much could have been done, too, to produce more mortars. The programme was clear — it was embodied in a decision issued by the Politbureau of the Central Committee on January 30, 1940. But the 82-mm and 120-mm mortars began to enter service in sufficient numbers only immediately before the war. Even in June 1941 our mortars outnumbered the German and proved technically superior to them.

Stalin believed artillery to be the foremost weapon of war, and gave much attention to its designing and production. D. F. Ustinov was then People's Commissar for Armaments, B. L. Vannikov People's Commissar for Ammunition, and Generals I. I. Ivanov and V. G. Grabin chief designers of artillery systems. Stalin knew them all personally, often received them, and had full trust in them.

**Signals service, engineer troops. Railways and Motor Roads.** A commission instituted by the Central Committee of the Party and the Council of People's Commissars in the middle of

1940 rightly indicated that the strength of the engineer troops in peacetime was insufficient for their normal deployment in wartime.

On the eve of the war, their number was enlarged and fresh units were raised; the engineer troops' overall training was improved, as well as the structure and operational make-up of the signals service; signals chiefs in large units stepped up their efforts to make communications suit war conditions; new equipment began entering service. Yet we did not manage to put right all the flaws in the engineer troops and in the signals service before the war.

Towards the end of February the People's Commissar for Defence and I closely examined the building of fortified zones along the state border, and the condition of railways, motor roads, earth roads, and communications facilities.

Generals N. F. Vatutin, G. K. Malandin and A. M. Vasilevsky reported on the state of affairs in every detail. The following conclusions were drawn.

The motor-road network in West Byelorussia and the West Ukraine was in poor condition. Many bridges could not support medium tanks and artillery guns; earth roads required overhauling

My first deputy, Vatutin, reported to the People's Commissar on the condition of railways in all border military districts.

"Railway areas near the border," he reported, "are ill-fitted for massive troop detrainment. This is borne out by the following figures. The German railways leading to Lithuania accommodate 220 trains a day, while our railway running from Lithuania in the direction of the border of East Prussia puts through only 84 trains. The situation in West Byelorussia and the West Ukraine is no better: there our railway mileage is scarcely half that of the Germans. The railway troops and construction organizations will clearly fail to do the work scheduled for 1941."

The People's Commissar observed that in 1940 the Commissariat for Transport was instructed by the Party's Central Committee to draft a seven-year plan for modernizing railways in the western part of the country. Still nothing really important had been done, except track altering and pre-

paring elementary railway facilities for entrainment and detrainment of personnel and military freight.

We knew that on February 18, 1941, D. G. Pavlov, Commander of the Western Military District, had dispatched a message to Stalin, Molotov and Timoshenko, asking for considerable allocations for road-building. The message read in part: "I believe that the western theatre of operations must be organized during 1941 by all means. Therefore, it is utterly impossible to drag out the construction over several years."

Major-General N. I. Gapich, the Red Army Chief of Signals, reported to us that there were shortages of the latest communication facilities, that mobilization and emergency equipment stockpiles were inadequate.

The General Staff radio net had only 39 per cent of the required RAT radio stations and 60 per cent of the RAF and 11-AK radio stations. There were only 45 per cent of the required chargers. The Western Military District on the border had only 27 per cent of the required radio stations; the respective figures for the Kiev and Baltic Military Districts were 30 and 52 per cent. Other radio and wire facilities did not fare any better.

Prior to the war it was commonly believed that mainly the facilities of the People's Commissariat for Communications and those of the Ministry of Internal Affairs would be used to control the Fronts, the interior military districts, and the High Command Reserve troops should war break out. The communication centres of the High Command, the General Staff and the Fronts were to be provided with all requisites by local branches of the People's Commissariat for Communications, which later proved totally unprepared for wartime duty.

I knew how local communications worked because during field and staff exercises they were leased to us. Even at that time we doubted their ability to provide the armed forces with dependable communications in wartime.

These circumstances caused the main fault in the training of commanders and staff personnel of large units and army formations: their lack of skill in controlling the troops in fluid, rapidly changing combat situations. Commanders and staffs used wire rather than radio communications. What came of this

at the outset of the war is commonly known. Inner radio communications in air force units, airfield networks, and tank units, where wire communications are totally unacceptable, were not effective enough.

There was no underground cable network to service operational and strategic echelons. Urgent measures were imperative to put the telephone, telegraph and radio networks into proper order.

Nothing changed after discussing these matters with the People's Commissariat for Communications: not because someone was unwilling to do extra work — better organization of communications was plainly necessary. The People's Commissariat simply could not physically meet the army's demands. Everything done in late 1940 and early 1941 to improve local communications and links between certain centres and Moscow could not settle the problem.

On hearing our reports, Timoshenko said:

"I agree with your view of the situation. But I don't believe anything decisive can be done to eliminate all the defects. I saw Stalin yesterday. He received Pavlov's cable and said to tell him that although his demands were ligitimate, we are not in a position to meet them."

The Air Force. As I said earlier, the Party and Government always devoted much attention to the development of aviation. In 1939, the Defence Committee decreed the construction of nine aircraft works and seven aircraft engine works. The next year another seven civil industry plants were converted to aircraft production. The aircraft industry was provided excellent facilities; production increased over 70 per cent towards the close of 1940 (as against the year before). More aircraft engine and aircraft instruments works were being built on sites turned over to the aircraft industry by other industries.

According to the confirmed archive data, the Red Army received 17,745 combat planes, including 3,719 of the latest models, between January 1, 1939 and June 22, 1941.

A new stage opened in aircraft construction. The Central Aero- and Hydro-Dynamics Institute was almost entirely

## DESIGNERS OF SOVIET WEAPONRY

S V Ilyushin, left



A. N Tupolev



V. A. Degtiarev and F. V Tokarev









Good progress in combat training



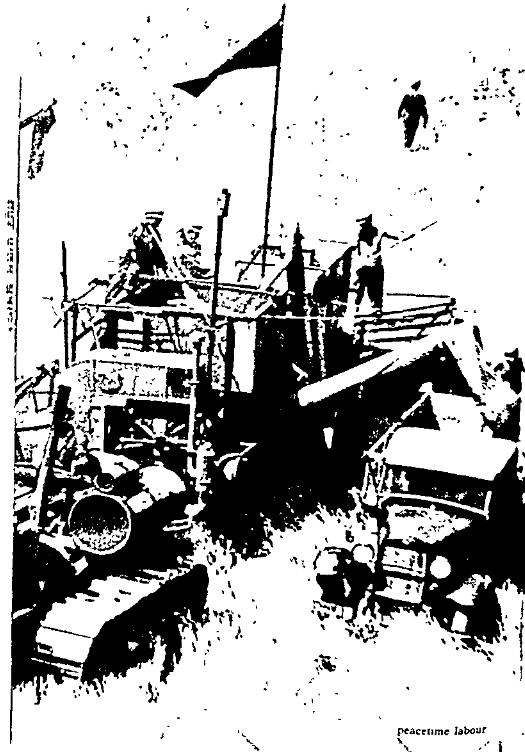


Resting up





Resting up



peacetime labour

Off to the East! Soviet girls volunteer to work on building projects in the Soviet Far East

Moscow. A few days before the war

reconstructed; new combat aircraft design offices sprang up. Able designers such as S. V. Ilyushin, A. I. Mikoyan, S. A. Lavochkin, V. M. Petlyakov, A. S. Yakovlev and their teams of young experts came up with the Yak-1, MIG-3 and LAGG-3 fighters, the Il-2, attack plane, the PE-2 dive bomber and others, some twenty types in all.

In late 1940 and early 1941, batch production was stepped up of the best types of aircraft. The Party's Central Committee and Stalin gave much attention to aircraft designers. It can even be said that aviation was a kind of hobby with Stalin.

But industry could not keep pace with the needs of the time. Old types of aircraft were still plentiful on the eve of the war. Some 75-80 per cent of the planes were technically inferior to their German counterparts. New aircraft were still in the testing stage; only 21 per cent of the air units had been re-armed.

True, the number of aircraft units multiplied: by June 1941 the total number of air regiments exceeded the 1939 figure considerably. The air division became the highest tactical formation of the fighter, attack, and bomber aircraft, mostly of mixed composition, each comprising four or five regiments; with each regiment consisting of four or five squadrons.

Such organization of the Air Force ensured more efficient combat cooperation within the air force and with the land forces. Immediately before the war the Air Force comprised 45 per cent of bomber regiments, 42 per cent of fighter regiments, and 13 per cent of attack, reconnaissance, and other planes.

At the end of 1940, the People's Commissar for Defence, the General Staff and the Air Force Headquarters worked out recommendations on reorganization and re-equipment of the Air Force and submitted them to the Party's Central Committee; they were duly endorsed.

The resolution on reorganizing the Soviet Air Force provided for the activation of new units (106 regiments), expansion and improvement of the Air Force school network and re-equipment of combat formations with the latest planes. By the end of May 1941 we managed to form 19 regiments and equip them nearly to full strength.



reconstructed; new combat aircraft design offices sprang up. Able designers such as S. V. Ilyushin, A. I. Mikoyan, S. A. Lavochkin, V. M. Petlyakov, A. S. Yakovlev and their teams of young experts came up with the Yak-1, MIG-3 and LAGG-3 fighters, the Il-2, attack plane, the PE-2 dive bomber and others, some twenty types in all.

In late 1940 and early 1941, batch production was stepped up of the best types of aircraft. The Party's Central Committee and Stalin gave much attention to aircraft designers. It can even be said that aviation was a kind of hobby with Stalin.

But industry could not keep pace with the needs of the time. Old types of aircraft were still plentiful on the eve of the war. Some 75-80 per cent of the planes were technically inferior to their German counterparts. New aircraft were still in the testing stage; only 21 per cent of the air units had been re-armed.

True, the number of aircraft units multiplied: by June 1941 the total number of air regiments exceeded the 1939 figure considerably. The air division became the highest tactical formation of the fighter, attack, and bomber aircraft, mostly of mixed composition, each comprising four or five regiments; with each regiment consisting of four or five squadrons.

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On April 10, 1941, the Central Committee of the Party and the USSR Council of People's Commissars decreed a reorganization of the Air Force Logistical Service on an area principle: logistical agencies were detached from combat air units; air base areas were formed and ground service battalions activated. Air base areas were made agencies of the air force logistics at army, district, or front level. There were air bases per division, comprising ground service battalions, one per air regiment. Reconnaissance and ground forces support aviation retained their organic logistical installations. This more flexible logistical structure was to be introduced in July 1941. Yet in practice we had had to complete the innovation when the war was already in full swing.

The need to increase the strength of the airborne troops was imposed by the nature of modern warfare. Activation of five airborne corps was started in April 1941. They were manned by June 1, but combat equipment was insufficient. Therefore only old airborne brigades united into new corps, were battleready. Most of the personnel of the new formations was employed as infantry.

The Party's Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars endorsed an extra plan for airfield construction, whereby 190 new airfields were to be sited in the western areas. By the outbreak of the war, construction was going full blast, but most airfields had not yet been completed.

By and large, the Air Force was in the midst of far-reaching reorganization when the war broke out — going over to new planes and retraining the personnel, both fliers and ground crews.

Few units were trained for flying in truly difficult conditions, only 15 per cent of fliers, for night flying. Air Force commanders, often too preoccupied with training the personnel to master new equipment, failed to maintain combat readiness on the old planes.

Our Air Force could have been fully re-equipped and made much stronger in a mere year or year and a half.

**The Air Defence.** The danger of an air attack on the country was growing imminent in the prewar years. Hence the

Party's Central Committee demanded that air defence be made more effective and outlined concrete measures towards this end. First of all, important organizational measures were taken, since the air defence system adopted in 1932 was considerably outmoded.

The country's territory was divided into air defence zones within the then military districts.

Each zone had units and formations for the defence of towns and military installations within its confines. The responsibility of Military District Commanders for air defence was enhanced; aircraft organic to the District Air Force but detailed for air defence remained under the District Air Force Command. Unquestionably, it would have been better to provide single leadership and centralize control of air defence on a countrywide scale. But we did not accomplish this until the war was well underway, in November 1941.

*How were the air defence forces armed?* By June 1941 they had about 85 per cent of their assigned medium-calibre guns and 70 per cent of small calibre. The shortage of fighter planes came to 40 per cent, while anti-aircraft machine-guns came to 70 per cent of the quota, and barrage balloons and searchlights to something like 50 per cent.

Air defence forces in the western border districts, and in Moscow and Leningrad, were better armed. The western districts received new weaponry in greater amounts than other districts, were fitted out with anti-aircraft guns to the extent of 90-95 per cent, and had new means for detecting and tracking an air enemy. The forces defending Moscow, Leningrad and Baku had over 40 per cent of all the medium-calibre anti-aircraft batteries. Some 30 radar stations were located in the Leningrad and Moscow air defence zones.

Acting on our report, the Party's Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars adopted a decision to form fighter corps to strengthen the air defence of Moscow and Leningrad. These corps played a very important role in warding off fascist air attacks on Moscow and Leningrad.

At the time the war began the new air defence system had not been properly lined up, units had only begun acquiring and mastering the latest weaponry. Transport was in short supply.

The Navy. Before the war the Navy had its own People's Commissariat. In the matter of the Navy's operational use the Commissariat acted on the general operational and mobilization plans drawn up by the General Staff. After assuming the office of Chief of General Staff, what with the short time that had passed and being very busy with matters relating directly to the Red Army, I could not familiarize myself thoroughly with the state of the Navy. I knew, however, that the naval personnel had been well trained and that the commanders of fleets and flotillas and their staffs were ready for combat. Navy GHQ was headed at that time by Admiral I. S. Isakov, a gifted, resolute man, with plenty of initiative.

The build-up of the naval forces was being accelerated. The first 11 months of 1940 had seen the launching of 100 destroyers, submarines, minesweepers, and torpedo boats — all of them highly effective in combat. Some 270 ships of all types were being built in 1940. New naval bases were being established and regions in the Baltic, Barents and Black Sea were being assimilated.

A modern navy is an expensive affair, especially the big ships which are also good targets for attack from the air and for torpedoing. The Defence Committee of the USSR Council of People's Commissars correctly decided in 1939 to curtail and then stop altogether the building of battleships and heavy cruisers which entailed immense expenditures and required great amounts of steel, besides diverting considerable numbers of engineers, technicians and workers of the shipbuilding industry.

On the other hand, coast and air defence, and mine and torpedo armaments were being neglected. The People's Commissariat of the Navy underestimated the importance of the Northern Fleet, which was destined to play a very big role in the war.

On the whole, the Soviet Navy was impressive on the eve of the war, and gave the enemy a fitting reception.

The increase in the strength of our armed forces gives an idea of how seriously the Party and Government went about building up the country's defences in 1939 to 1941. During that period the armed forces increased by 180 per cent; 125 new divisions were formed and by January 1, 1941, there were

over 4,200,000 men in the ground, air, naval, and air defence forces.

In one of the earlier chapters I touched slightly on the role of universal civil defence training. The tradition of training the civilian population and above all, the youth, for the defence of their motherland, before being called up was very popular among the public. By January 1, 1941, the organization engaged in mass defence work, Osoaviakhim, had a membership of over 13 million. Every year tens of thousands of enthusiasts learned flying, parachute jumping, sharpshooting, or aircraft repairs at the three hundred or more flying and motor clubs, flying schools and glider clubs. How useful these skills were later to the volunteer *opolcheniye* and the partisans!

As to the professional training of commanders of all ranks, hundreds of thousands of them received a good schooling in the two hundred military schools of the Red Army and Navy, the nineteen academies, the ten military departments at civil institutes and the seven higher naval schools.

On the occasions that I visited the General Staff Academy, which was under my supervision, I could yet again satisfy myself that on the eve of the war modern military theory was being presented to students in lectures, literature, training plans and aids, taking into account much of the experience of the already ongoing Second World War. Emphasis was placed on the relentlessness and bitterness of the armed struggle, on the possibility of it being drawn out, and the necessity of mobilizing the efforts of the entire nation and uniting front and rear in the struggle.

Military strategy was chiefly based on the correct assertion that an aggressor can only be defeated by offensive operations. Yet other variations — meeting engagements, forced retreat, fighting when encircled and night fighting — were not looked into solidly enough.

On the whole the military theory of that time was basically up to the mark. Still, practice lagged behind theory to a certain extent...

Looking into operational-strategic questions I came to the conclusion that in the defence of such an immense country as ours there were a number of serious faults. This was also the opinion of the leading personnel of the General Staff; they

informed me that my predecessors in this office had spoken to the same effect on many occasions.

The concentration of large numbers of German troops in East Prussia, Poland, and the Balkans caused us particular anxiety. We were also disturbed by the inadequate combat readiness of our armed forces in the western military districts.

After reflecting on these questions, N. F. Vatutin and I informed the People's Commissar for Defence in detail about the flaws in the organization and combat readiness of our troops, about the state of the mobilization supplies, particularly shells and bombs. We also pointed out that the industry was behind in fulfilling our arms orders.

Again, Timoshenko remarked: "The leadership know all that very well. I don't think that at present the country can give us anything more."

One day he called me in and said:

"Yesterday I saw Stalin about the lorry-mounted multiple rocket launchers. He wanted to know if you had taken over from Meretskov and how you felt on your new job. He asked you to report to him in a couple of days."

"What is he liable to ask me about?"

"Everything," said the People's Commissar. "But remember that he won't listen to long reports. What it takes you several hours to tell me, you must tell him in ten minutes."

"What can I tell him in ten minutes? They're serious questions and call for serious consideration. Their importance has got to be understood and the necessary measures taken."

"He knows for the most part what you want to tell him," Timoshenko said, "so try to concentrate on the key problems."

Saturday night I went to Stalin at his country-cottage, taking along a list of the questions I wanted to raise. I found there Marshal Timoshenko, Marshal Kulik and some members of the Politbureau.

After greeting me, Stalin asked if I was familiar with the Katyusha rocket launchers.

"I've only heard about them, but haven't seen them," I said.

"Then, Timoshenko, Kulik and Aborenkov must take you to the testing grounds in the next few days, so you can see them fired. Now tell us how things are at the General Staff."

I briefly repeated what I had already reported to Timoshenko,

and said that in view of the gravity of the military and political situation urgent measures must be taken to eliminate the flaws in the defence of the western border and in the armed forces.

Molotov interrupted me:

"So you think we'll have to fight the Germans soon?"

Stalin motioned him to keep silent.

After listening to what I had to say, Stalin asked us all to the dinner table. The interrupted conversation continued. Stalin wanted to know what I thought of the German air force.

"The German air force is not bad. The flying personnel have had good practice in coordinating action with the ground forces. So far as the aircraft are concerned, our new fighters and bombers are not a bit worse than the Germans' and perhaps even better. It's too bad, however, that they are so few."

"Fighter planes are especially few," Timoshenko added.

Someone remarked sarcastically:

"Timoshenko thinks more of defence aviation."

The People's Commissar did not answer. He was hard of hearing, and I think simply had not heard the remark.

Dinner was simple. We had thick Ukrainian borshch, followed by well cooked buckwheat porridge and boiled meat, and then by stewed and finally fresh fruit. Stalin was in high spirits and joked a lot. He was drinking the light Georgian Khvanchkara wine and pressed it on the others, but most of them preferred brandy.

At the end, Stalin said the most important questions would have to be examined and worked out, and submitted to the Government for decision. But in doing so, we ought to proceed from our actual capabilities and not make wild proposals that were unrealistic at the moment owing to our lack of means.

When I returned to the General Staff I jotted down everything Stalin had said, and picked out the questions which would have to be tackled first. These proposals were put before the Government.

The 18th All-Union Party Conference, which I had occasion to attend, was held from the 15th to 20th of February, 1941. The Conference called on Party organizations to give serious

attention to the needs of industry and transport, and particularly to the defence enterprises. Demands were increased. It was pointed out in the Conference resolutions that the heads of the People's Commissariats for Aviation, Chemicals, Ammunition, Electrical Appliances and a number of other industries of importance for defence, must take their cue from the criticism at the Conference and substantially improve their work — otherwise they would be removed from their posts.

The economic plan for 1941 adopted by the Conference — the last peacetime plan — provided for a considerable expansion of the defence industry.

At the Conference many military men were elected alternate members of the Central Committee or members of the Central Auditing Commission, among them I. V. Tyulenev, M. P. Kirponos, I. S. Yumashev, V. F. Tributs, and F. S. Oktyabrsky. Great confidence was also placed in me: I was elected alternate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

Immediately before the war the generals and officers working on our General Staff formed a compact, friendly, and close-knit team of competent and experienced men. I will name only a few of them.

The First Deputy Chief of General Staff was Lieutenant-General N. F. Vatutin, a man of exceptional industry and broad strategic thinking. The Deputy Chief of General Staff for organizational matters was Lieutenant-General V. D. Sokolovsky, appointed to this post at the beginning of spring 1941, before which he had been Chief of Staff of the Moscow Military District. During the war, Sokolovsky displayed great talent and the abilities of an outstanding military leader. Operations Division was headed by Major-General G. K. Malandin, a highly educated and competent man.

Major-General A. M. Vasilevsky was also working in Operations. During the war he proved himself to be an outstanding commander. A number of most important and brilliant operations were carried out under his guidance. Shortly before the war, Vasilevsky was working on the operational plan for the North-West and Western Directions.

Besides the generals I have named, there were a number of other capable and energetic commanders on the General

Staff who contributed to the high efficiency of the entire personnel.

The General Staff performed colossal operational, organizational and mobilization work and was the main machinery of the People's Commissariat for Defence.

Still, there were flaws in the work of the General Staff. When we looked into the state of affairs in the spring of 1941, for example, we found that neither the General Staff nor the People's Commissariat for Defence and the commanders of arms and services had prepared command posts from which they could direct the armed forces in case of war, quickly hand down directives from the High Command, and receive and process reports from the troops.

During the prewar years, the construction of command posts was neglected. When war began the High Command, the General Staff, the staffs of all the arms of the service and the central divisions, had to control operations from their peacetime offices, which greatly hampered their work.

At the beginning of the war, questions concerning the High Command had not been settled as concerned its structure, personnel, location and logistic support.

During the five years preceding the war there had been four Chiefs of General Staff. Such frequent change of leadership made it impossible fully to develop the country's defence and give deep consideration to all aspects of the coming war.

What were the main questions the General Staff was working on during those months?

These days some writers of war memoirs maintain that before the war we had no mobilization plans and no plans for tactical and strategic deployment.

Actually, of course, the General Staff had operational and mobilization plans. We never stopped working on them and bringing them up to date. After each revision they were immediately reported to the country's leadership and on being approved were at once made known to the military districts. On the eve of the war the Operations Division — Generals Malandin, Vasilevsky,. Anisov, and others — did much work

on the operational and mobilization plans. Before I was appointed to the General Staff, overall guidance in developing plans came from Marshal of the Soviet Union Shaposhnikov and later General of the Army Meretskov and Lieutenant-General Vatutin.

In the autumn of 1940 the previous operations plan was thoroughly revised and brought in line with the objectives that would face us in the event of attack. True, there were strategic mistakes in the plan, stemming from an erroneous conception.

As we saw it, the most dangerous strategic direction was the South-Western (the Ukraine) and not the Western (Byelorussia), where the Hitler High Command concentrated and engaged its most powerful ground and air formations in June 1941. Yet the Western Direction was the shortest route to Moscow.

As a consequence, the 19th Army and a number of units and formations of the 16th Army concentrated in the Ukraine were rushed to the west and went into action at once as part of the Western Front. This undoubtedly affected the defence operations in the west.

When revising the operations plan in the spring of 1941 (February-April), we failed to eliminate all the effects of this mistake and did not lay down a large enough force in the western sector.

Stalin was convinced that in the war against the Soviet Union the Nazis would first try to seize the Ukraine and the Donets Coal Basin in order to deprive the country of its most important economic regions and lay hands on the Ukraine grain, Donets coal and, later, Caucasian oil. During the discussion of the operational plan in the spring of 1941, Stalin said: "Nazi Germany will not be able to wage a major lengthy war without those vital resources."

Stalin was the greatest authority for all of us, and it never occurred to anybody to question his opinion and assessment of the situation. Yet his conjecture as to the main strike of the Nazi invader proved incorrect.

The last version of the mobilization plan (concerning organization and logistics) was approved in February 1941 and designated as MP-41. It was handed down to the districts with

instructions to correct the preceding mobilization plans accordingly by May 1, 1941.

In 1940 it had been decided to move some troops of the western districts to the western regions recently reunified with the Soviet Union. Although those regions had not yet been duly prepared for defence, the first echelons of troops from the western military districts were deployed there.

Here I would like to dwell on the lot of the old and new fortified areas (FAs).

The construction of new FAs on the western frontier had been started in early 1940 under a project approved by Stalin on the basis of Voroshilov's and Shaposhnikov's report.

The building of the fortified areas was not completed by June 1941. By the time the war began some 2,500 reinforced-concrete structures had been set up, 1,000 being equipped with appropriate fortified-area artillery and the other 1,500 having only machine guns.

As for the Ukraine, the Rava-Russkaya and Peremyshl areas were best prepared for combat in June 1941. And they played a most commendable part in the fighting of the first days of the war, which will be described later in the book.

At this point I think it relevant to elucidate the removal of artillery from the old fortified areas.

In February and March 1941, the Chief Military Council of the Red Army met twice to discuss how it could accelerate the construction and equipment of the new FAs. I remember the heated debates that arose at the sittings. But spirited as they were, these disputes did not yield any practical solution of speeding up the manufacture of FA guns and equipment.

This was why Marshal Kulik, Deputy Defence Commissar for Armaments, Marshal Shaposhnikov, Deputy Defence Commissar for FAs, and Zhdanov, member of the Chief Military Council, proposed that part of the required armaments be transferred from some old FAs to those under construction. Marshal Timoshenko and I objected, pointing out that the old FAs might still be needed. Besides, the guns in the old FAs did not fit the new fortifications in design.

Because of the controversy among Chief Military Council members the issue was reported to Stalin. The latter supported Kulik, Shaposhnikov and Zhdanov, and accordingly gave

orders to dismantle part of the artillery on second-rate sectors and move it to the western and south-western areas, adapting the constructively outdated guns to the new fortifications, at least temporarily.

The old FAs had been built in 1929-1935. The permanent emplacements were mostly provided with machine-guns only. In 1938-1939 some of them were reinforced with artillery systems. By decision of the Red Army Chief Military Council of November 15, 1939, the authorized strength of the old fortified areas was to be reduced by more than one-third. And now it was decided to remove artillery from some sectors.

After another report to Stalin, however, we were given permission to keep part of the artillery in the sectors in question.

In connection with the FAs whose construction began in 1938 and 1939, the General Staff dispatched directives on April 8, 1941, to the Western and Kiev Special Military Districts, which read in part:

"Pending special intructions the Slutsk, Sebezh, Shepetovka, Izyaslavl, Starokonstantinovka, and Ostropolye fortified areas are to be maintained in their present state.

"In order to ensure operability of the above areas in wartime, the following measures are to be implemented:

"Train commanding personnel for fortified areas.

"In order to complete the system of artillery and machine-gun fire, determine in each defence centre and strongpoint the sites of log-and-earth or stone-and-concrete emplacements to be built within the first ten days of war by field forces...

"On the basis of designs and technical specifications issued by the Red Army Defensive Works Department, calculate the required amount of weapons and elementary interior equipment.

"In calculating manpower, means and the scale of work, take into account the ferro-concrete structures set up in 1938-1939 in the Letichev, Mogilev, Yampol, Novograd-Volynsky, Minsk, Polotsk, and Mozyr fortified areas.

"The Head of the Defensive Works Department is to work out and dispatch to the districts by May I, 1941, technical specifications on the installation of the artillery pieces and elementary interior equipment in the 1938-1939 fortifications."

It follows from the aforesaid that an error in timing occurred in bringing the weaponry of the fortifications on the old state frontier to readiness for combat. The General Staff directive required them to be combatworthy by the tenth day of the war, whereas in fact many points in the old FAs were captured by the enemy before the tenth day.

The FAs along the old frontier had not been dismantled and wholly disarmed, as claimed in some war memoirs and historical works. They had been essentially kept intact in the more important sectors and, what is more, were to have been reinforced. But the developments in the first few days of the war prevented us from carrying out all the contemplated measures and using the old FAs more effectively.

As regards the new fortified areas, the People's Commissariat for Defence and the General Staff repeatedly urged the military districts to intensify their construction. Some 140,000 people were engaged daily in putting up fortifications along the new frontier.

I would like to quote a General Staff directive of April 14, 1941, on this matter:

"*Despite a number of instructions issued by the Red Army General Staff, the work of installing casemate artillery in hardened emplacements and putting said emplacements in combat readiness is proceeding at an impermissibly slow pace.*

"The People's Commissar for Defence orders that:

"1. All the available FA weaponry in the given District be immediately mounted in combat emplacements and the latter be put in combat readiness.

"2. In the absence of special armaments, it is essential that machine-guns on field mounts and, where possible, guns be installed temporarily in embrasure openings and portholes.

"3. Emplacements be put in combat readiness even if the rest of the authorized equipment is not available, but mounting armoured, metal and grated doors is absolutely necessary.

"4. Proper care and maintenance of armaments installed in emplacements be provided for.

"5. The Head of the Red Army Defensive Works Department shall immediately dispatch to the Districts technical specifications on the installation of provisional armaments in ferro-concrete bunkers.

"Progress reports are to be sent to the Red Army General Staff by April 25, 1941.

Signed: General of the Army G. Zhukov,
Chief of the Red Army General Staff
Certified: Major-General S. Shiryaev,
Head of the Fortified Areas Department
of the Red Army General Staff."

In March 1941 the General Staff completed the mobilization plan for the munition industry in the event of war. General Sokolovsky, Deputy Chief of General Staff, and myself submitted this plan to the Chairman of the Defence Committee under the Council of People's Commissars.

A special memorandum on ammunition was drawn up by the General Staff and addressed to the Party Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. The memorandum concerned the supply of shells and mines. There was a shortage of howitzer, anti-aircraft and anti-tank shells. Shells for the latest artillery systems were disastrously low.

Stalin handed on our memorandum for the Ammunition Commissariat and the Commissariat for Defence to examine, and to deliver an opinion.

N. A. Voznesensky and other comrades found our demands somewhat exaggerated and told Stalin that the request for 1941 should be met to the extent of 20 per cent at the most. Stalin agreed.

After several more memos, however, Stalin issued a special decision on considerably extending the manufacture of ammunition in the second half of 1941 and in early 1942.

During the spring of 1941 the central supply bodies under the People's Commissariat for Defence were working hard to increase at the expense of the state reserves the emergency stock of fuel, foodstuffs, clothing and equipment in all the western frontier districts. The district ammunition depots were substantially replenished from Defence Commissariat stocks.

The People's Commissar for Defence and the General Staff, myself included, thought it necessary in view of the imminent war to bring the materiel closer to the troops. What was seemingly correct, however, turned out to be a mistake owing to the developments of the first few weeks of the war. The enemy breached our defences and swiftly seized

the depots of the districts with all that was stored in them, which badly complicated the supply of troops and the activation of reserves.

In revising the operational plans in spring 1941, little attention was given to the new methods of warfare at the initial stage of hostilities. The People's Commissar for Defence and the General Staff believed that war between countries as big as Germany and the Soviet Union would follow the old scheme: the main forces engage in battle after several days of frontier fighting. As regards concentration and deployment deadlines, it was assumed that conditions for the two countries were the same. In fact, however, the forces and conditions proved to be far from equal.

What was Germany's economic potential when it attacked the Soviet Union?

Having seized control over practically all economic and military strategic resources of Europe, Germany had given its armed forces modern weapons and combat equipment, and sufficient material facilities. The absence of actively operating forces in Western Europe at the time, gave the Nazis a chance to concentrate the bulk of their troops against the Soviet Union.

On the eve of the war, Germany was putting out 31.8 million tons of steel a year (together with the occupied countries) and 257.4 million tons of coal (439 million together with its satellites). The Soviet Union's output amounted to 18.3 million and 165.9 million tons respectively. Germany's weak point was oil production, although this was somewhat compensated by importing Romanian oil and by previously built up reserves, and by synthetic fuels.

Unscrupulously trampling the Versailles limitations, the Hitler leadership, in pursuance of its aggressive plans, subordinated the country's economic policy to the interests of its contemplated aggressive war. German industry was completely attuned to war. All other considerations receded to the background.

Germany build up a mighty military and economic potential. In a relatively short period more than 300 large munition works went up. The war industry output in 1940 rose by two-thirds over 1939, and 22 times over 1932. In 1941 German industry turned out over 11,000 planes, 5,200 tanks and

armoured vehicles, more than 7,000 guns of 75-mm and more and some 1.7 million carbines, rifles and submachine guns. One should remember the big stocks of armaments requisitioned in other countries and the industrial power of Germany's satellites and the occupied countries.

At the end of March 1941, the Soviet Government learned that Japan's Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka was having highly secret talks with Ribbentrop and the military leaders of the Nazi Reich in Berlin.

Nothing was simpler than guessing the nature of these negotiations. Hitler was trying to encircle the USSR militarily by forming a bloc of Germany and imperialist Japan.[1]

This meant, in effect, that the Soviet Union would have to fight on two fronts.

Hence, seeing to the Soviet Union's security in the Far East became an issue of extraordinary importance.

In April 1941, I forget on what day, Stalin telephoned me.

"Matsuoka is on his way home from Germany," he said. "Receive him cordially." (He spoke the word "cordially" with a special stress.)

"Have you any specific orders?" I asked.

"All Matsuoka wants is to make your acquaintance."

It was immaterial to me what had motivated the Japanese Foreign Minister. Most likely, the Khalkhin Gol events were still fresh in Matsuoka's memory.

A few days later, chief of the Defence Commissariat' Foreign Relations Department let me know that Matsuoka and his interpreter would call on me in two hours.

The door opened at precisely the stated time and in walked Yosuke Matsuoka, bowing low.

I greeted him cordially, inquired about his health and wondered if the journey had tired him. He replied evasively:

"I like distant travel. This was my first visit to Europe. And you — have you ever been to any European country?"

"I regret to say, I haven't," I replied. "But I intend to go at the first suitable opportunity. I have read about Germany,

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[1] As the world learned later, the sides came to an agreement on this score; more, Ribbentrop told Matsuoka that Germany had already as much as won the war.— *Author.*

Italy, and England, but the best of books cannot give you a clear enough picture of any country. You get to understand a country, its people, ethics and customs much better if you visit and have contact with it."

Our conversation proceeded on these lines, for both of us avoided acute political issues. Matsuoka created an unpleasant impression, which did not make for outspoken talks. I could feel he was intent on hearing more rather than speaking himself.

When Matsuoka left I dialled Stalin at once, and told him of the nature of the visit and of my impression. And I had the feeling Stalin was pleased with my account. At the end, he said to me:

"The Japanese Government has agreed to sign a neutrality treaty."

The Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact was signed on April 13, 1941, for a term of five years. The signatories pledged peaceful and friendly relations, respect for each other's territorial integrity, and the inviolability of the other side.

A special clause said that if one of the signatories is attacked by a third power, the other signatory will observe neutrality.

The Soviet Government was aware that the Soviet-Japanese neutrality agreement lessened the threat of a Japanese attack on our country, and of having to fight on two fronts. True, there was nothing to guarantee that militarist Japan, the ally of Nazi Germany, would abide by the treaty. That was, indeed, why we were compelled to keep a considerable force in the Soviet Far East during our war against Nazi Germany. But in any event, owing to the ever tenser international situation, the treaty held promise of a certain gain in time.

What did we know then about the German armed forces massed against the Soviet Union?

According to General Golikov's intelligence division of the General Staff, more German troops were being moved into East Prussia, Poland and Romania since late January 1941. The intelligence people believed that during February and March the increase amounted to nine divisions: three infantry divisions against the Baltic Military District, one armoured and two infantry divisions against the Western Military District, and one

infantry division and three panzer regiments against the Kiev Military District.

All the information General Golikov had was immediately forwarded to Stalin. What I do not know is what intelligence General Golikov laid before Stalin on his own, by-passing the Defence Commissar and the Chief of General Staff, as he often did. Naturally, this could not but affect the final situation analysis. As General Golikov reported, the overall increase in German troops from the Baltic Sea to Slovakia on April 4, 1941 amounted to five infantry and six panzer divisions. Altogether 72-73 divisions were lined up against the USSR. To this we should add the troops stationed in Romania, numbering one motorized and nine infantry divisions.

The concentration of German troops against the USSR reached 103 to 107 divisions by May 5, 1941, including six divisions in the Danzig and Poznan areas and five divisions in Finland. The disposition of these troops was as follows: 23 to 24 divisions in East Prussia; 29 in Poland against the Western District; 31 to 34 in Poland against the Kiev District; 14 to 15 in Romania and Hungary.

The enemy carried out large-scale works preparing the combat theatre: laying second railway tracks in Slovakia and Romania, extending the system of airfields and landing grounds and intensively building munition depots. In towns and at industrial enterprises they organized air-defence training, built bomb-proof shelters and conducted trial mobilizations.

Of the Hungarian troops, up to four corps were in the Carpathian Ukraine. A sizable part of the Romanian troops were in the Carpathians. In Finland up to 22,000 German troops were disembarked during the 10th to 29th of April at the port of Abo (Turku) and headed for Rovaniemi and Kirkenes. General Golikov believed that further German reinforcements were likely with troop contingents that had done their job in Yugoslavia.

In the spring of 1941, the Nazis had no fear of any serious action by their Western opponents. For that reason the bulk of the German armed forces was concentrated all the way from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The intelligence service reported that as on June 1, 1941, up to 120 German divisions were positioned against the USSR.

Towards June 1941 Germany's armed strength totalled some 8,500,000, an increase of 3,550,000 since 1940, the number of divisions reaching 214. Our armed forces numbered over 5,000,000 at that time, counting the additional contingents called up.

Hitler believed this was the most suitable moment to attack the Soviet Union.

The Nazi Command started mass-scale troop transports eastward on May 25, 1941. By that time the railways had been put on full capacity schedule. Between May 25 and mid-June a total of 47 German divisions, including 28 panzer and motorized, were moved to the Soviet border.

Speaking of our own affairs, throughout March and April 1941 the General Staff was busy finalizing the plan for covering the western frontier and the war mobilization plan. When finalizing the frontier plan we reported to Stalin that by our lights the troops of the Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa districts would not be able to repulse a German onslaught. We should immediately mobilize several armies from interior military districts, and move them in early May to the Baltic coast, Byelorussia and the Ukraine just in case.

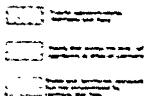
After repeated requests, we were finally allowed under the guise of mobile training camps, to transport two infantry armies of reduced strength to the Ukraine and another two to Byelorussia. We were strictly warned to be extremely cautious and to make sure there was operational secrecy.

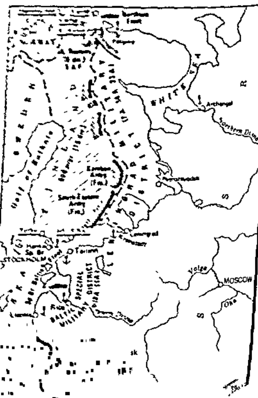
This was the time Stalin gave orders to accelerate the construction of basic and field airdromes. But the workforce was not available until after the spring farm work.

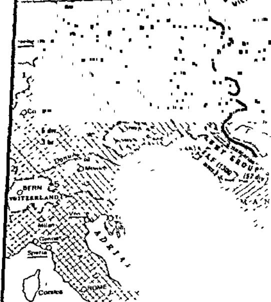
Once Stalin asked at the close of one of our conversations how the call-up of reservists was progressing. The People's Commissar for Defence answered that the draft was proceeding normally and the frontier districts would thus receive reinforcements towards the end of April. In early May, he said, the called up contingents would begin refresher training in the appropriate units.

On May 13 the General Staff issued a directive for interior military districts to shift troops westwards. The 22nd Army was moved from the Urals to Velikiye Luki; the 21st Army from the Volga to Gomel; the 19th Army from the North

NAZI GERMANY PREPARES ATTACK ON USSR





Caucasus to Belaya Tserkov; the 25th Rifle Corps from the Kharkov district to the Western Dvina and the 16th Army from Trans-Baikal to Shepetovka in the Ukraine.

Altogether, 28 rifle divisions and four army commands were moved in May from interior military districts closer to the western frontier. Regrettably, their strength ranged from 8,000 to 9,000, and they did not have all the assigned weapons.

In late May the General Staff instructed the commanders of frontier districts immediately to start preparing command posts, and stationing Front commands there not later that June 20 under the following scheme: the North-Western Front at Panevezhis; the Western Front at Obuz-Lesna; the South-Western Front in Ternopol and the Odessa district command (as an army command) in Tiraspol. The Front and Army field commands were to move into the listed areas by June 21-22.

Along the state frontier we had 47 land and 6 naval frontier guard detachments, 9 separate frontier commandant's offices; 11 regiments of the Internal Affairs Commissariat's operational troops and a number of rifle divisions — the first echelons of the covering force of military districts — which were stationed near the frontier but not deployed for combat.

All in all, the western frontier districts and fleets numbered 2.9 million men, over 1,500 modern aircraft and a large number of obsolete planes, about 38,000 guns and mortars, 1,475 new KV and T-34 tanks and a considerable number of obsolete light tanks with limited engine characteristics, some of which needed repairs.

The combat training in the frontier districts varied depending on many different factors. It is now difficult to recall in detail what was going on in the frontier districts and to describe the atmosphere that reigned there on the eve of the war.

I remember, giving much thought to the Kiev Special Military District which I had just left to take up my duties with the General Staff. How did things stand there?

Speaking of the Kiev District, I would like to cite a few passages from the memoirs of Marshal Bagramyan, then a Colonel and Head of the Kiev District Operations. I think his words give an accurate picture of the situation in the army and the difficulties of the last few prewar months.

"No sooner had we seen our Commander off to the 18t

## NAZI GERMANY PREPARES ATTACK ON USSR


Fascist aggressor-states Germany and Italy


States that joined the bloc of aggressors or allies of Germany


States and territories occupied but not incorporated by Germany and Italy


Deployment of Nazi, Finnish, Hungarian and Romanian troops along the Soviet border as on June 22, 1941

7 div — Number of Nazi divisions


Naval bases used by Germany and its allies

MILITARY DISTRICT — Border military districts of the USSR and their strength as on June 22, 1941

Soviet naval bases

1 – The Netherlands
2 – France
3 – Greece
4 – Montenegro (It.)
5 – Lichtenstein
6 – Governorship-General

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"No sooner had we seen our Commander off to the 18th

Party Conference," he writes in his memoirs, "than the General Staff urgently summoned to Moscow the chief of the District staff and the group of generals and officers who participated in drawing up the plan for covering the state frontier...

"In Moscow everything became clear: we were to take part in discussing operational measures for the District...

"Our work was underway when we were suddenly told to return to Kiev at once and resume our current duties. Back in Kiev we first had to examine the army plans for covering the state frontier which had been evolved by the army staffs on the basis of instructions received from the District command. To our great satisfaction, the army plans needed no serious revision. We only had to make insignificant corrections.

"But shortly afterwards, that is immediately after the seizure of Yugoslavia by the Nazis, the General Staff instructed us to make a number of important changes in the plan. The District command was ordered substantially to increase the troop contingent assigned to covering the state frontier.

"General Kirponos was disappointed at what he thought would weaken the reserve group of his troops. In his opinion, too large a force was assigned to passive defence. But orders were orders. On April 18, we instructed the armies to introduce these changes into the plan...

"The chiefs of army staffs and officers working on the plans were again summoned to District Headquarters. And again things began to hum. The fact that the generals and officers had to handle every small paper themselves considerably delayed the work...

"The revision of the plans was to be completed by May 10. Luckily, those were the last major changes. Otherwise we would never have finished the plans before the Nazi invasion.

"In the latter half of April, the Red Army leadership began visibly to step up reinforcement of the state frontier districts. On April 26, as I recall, we received orders from Moscow to form five mobile artillery anti-tank brigades and an airborne corps by June I. Four of our rifle divisions were to be transformed into alpine rifle divisions. The District command were informed that by May 25 the 31st Rifle Corps Command would arrive from the Soviet. Far East to join the local troops.

"The last month of spring brought us no thaw in international relations. Stalin's unexpected appointment to the post of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars was understood by everybody at District HQ as evidence of a further aggravation of international affairs. For the first time in Soviet history, Party and state leadership was placed in one person's hands. There were other signs of the rapidly growing danger.

"In the latter half of May, a directive came from the General Staff obliging the District command to receive and quarter troops from the North Caucasian Military District: the 34th Rifle Corps Command and corps units, four 12,000-strong rifle divisions, and an alpine rifle division. An operational group headed by Lieutenant-General M. A. Reiter, Second-in-Command of the North Caucasian District, was to assume charge of these troops... The same directive said that the troops would commence arriving on May 20. Although not unexpected, the directive gave the command a headache. Quartering almost a whole army in a short time was no easy job. Because of this contingency we had to put off the command and staff exercise scheduled for the latter half of May.

"Train after train began to arrive at the end of May. The Operations Department was transformed into a sort of control office to which all information flowed concerning the movement and condition of the troops coming from the North Caucasian Military District. I remember a typical fact. Commanders appointed to the arriving divisions noted that all the formations had only peacetime complements and were consequently short of a considerable number of officers, men, and materiel, above all transport and communication facilities which the divisions were to receive when mobilization was announced.

"Evidently, this was due to the desire to stick to the letter of the treaty with Nazi Germany.

"Anticipating events, I should say that when the war began these divisions were rushed to the western strategic sectors and immediately sent into action.

"Hardly had the five divisions from the North Caucasian Military District completed concentration in our District when the General Staff informed us in early June that under the directive of the People's Commissar for Defence the 19th

Army Command had been formed and was due to arrive in Cherkassy by June 10. The Army would incorporate the five divisions of the 34th and three divisions of the 25th Rifle Corps of the North Caucasian Military District... The Army was headed by Lieutenant-General I. S. Konev, Commander of the North Caucasian Military District.

"On the following day, the General Staff notified the District command that another force, the 16th Army under Lieutenant-General M. F. Lukin, from Trans-Baikalia was to be received and quartered. The plan provided for the concentration of General Lukin's troops on the territory of the Kiev Special Military District between June 15 and July 10.

"Thus, we had to receive and quarter a second army at very short notice. It was gratifying. The apprehension that in the event of war we would have no troops in depth was dispersed. It was now clear that the Defence Commissar and the General Staff had seen to it when issuing orders to prepare to move all District forces to the frontier."

Now, I think, it is time to speak of the main error of that time which naturally gave rise to many others — the miscalculation in deciding the probable date on which the German forces would attack.

The 1940 operational plan which, after finalization, was in force in 1941 provided that in the event of a threat of war:

all armed forces are to be alerted;

troop mobilization is to be carried out immediately on a nationwide scale;

troops are to be built up to wartime strength under the mobilization plan;

all mobilized troops are to be concentrated and deployed along the western frontier in accordance with the plans of the frontier military districts and the Military High Command.

Measures specified by the operational and mobilization plans could be implemented only by a special government decision. This was granted, and partially at that, only in the early morning of June 22, 1941. In the last few prewar months the leadership did not call for any steps that should have been taken when the threat of war was particularly great.

One cannot help asking why the leadership headed by Stalin did not put through the operational plan they themselves had endorsed?

More often than not, people blame Stalin for these errors and miscalculations. He had certainly made mistakes, but one cannot consider the causes of these mistakes in isolation from the objective historical processes and phenomena, from the entire complex of economic and political factors. Now that the consequences are known, nothing is easier than to return to the beginning and expound all sorts of opinions. And nothing is more difficult than to probe to the substance of the problem in its entirety — the battle of various forces, the multitude of opinions, and facts — at the given moment in history.

Comparing and analyzing Stalin's conversations with people close to him in my presence I have come to the firm conclusion that all his thoughts and deeds were prompted by the desire to avoid war, and that he was confident in succeeding.

Stalin was well aware what misfortunes would befall the Soviet people in a war with such a strong and wily enemy as Nazi Germany. That was why he strove, as our entire Party did, to win time.

It is now common knowledge that there had been warnings of the attack on the USSR that the Nazis were about to unleash, of the troops that were being massed on our borders, and so on. But at that time, as we see from enemy archives captured after the defeat of Nazi Germany, reports of quite a different nature landed on Stalin's desk as well, and in large numbers. Here is an example.

On February 15, 1941, acting on instructions from Hitler given at a conference on February 3, 1941, Field Marshal Keitel, Chief of Staff of the High Command, issued a special Directive for Misinforming the Enemy. To conceal the preparations for Operation Barbarossa, the intelligence and counter-intelligence division of the General Staff evolved and carried out numerous operations, spreading false rumours and false information. It was leaked that the movement of troops to the East was part of the "greatest misinformation manoeuvre in history designed to distract attention from final preparations for the invasion of England".

Maps of England were printed in vast quantities, English

interpreters were attached to units, preparations were made for "sealing off" some coastal areas along the English Channel, the Strait of Dover and Norway. Rumours were spread about an imaginary airborne corps. Mockups of rocket batteries were installed along the shore, and rumours circulated among the troops that they were being sent East for a rest before the invasion of England, and others that they would be allowed to pass through Soviet territory to attack India. To add credibility to the tale of a landing in England special operations were worked out under code names "Shark" and "Harpoon". The flood of propaganda was directed against England and the usual diatribes against the Soviet Union ceased. Diplomats did their bit, and so forth.

Superimposed on the deficiencies in the general combat readiness of the Soviet Armed Forces, such information explains the extreme caution Stalin displayed when it came to carrying out the basic preparations provided for in the operational and mobilization plans for repulsing possible aggression.

Stalin was also aware of the fact that, as I have already mentioned, owing to the shift from the territorial to the cadre system of command, units and formations were headed by young commanders and political officers who had not yet acquired the operational and tactical skill required for the posts they held.

Acting on the decisions of the 18th Party Congress and subsequent instructions of the Party's Central Committee on the selection, education and training of leading cadres, the Command and the Party and political bodies in the army had by the summer of 1941 carried out a vast amount of training and educational work, which raised the general theoretical level and practical skills of cadres in all arms of the service.

Nevertheless the question of the armed forces' commanding personnel remained a serious problem in 1941. The mass promotion of young commanders to high posts lowered the army's fighting capacity for a certain time. When important and major organizational measures were carried out shortly before the war, the shortage of skilled commanders, specialists, tankmen, gunners, flyers and ground crews made itself felt quite clearly. The substantial increase in strength of our armed forces made the shortage still more perceptible. It was assumed

that this could for the most part be overcome by the end of 1941.

While wishing to preserve peace as the decisive condition for building socialism in the USSR, Stalin saw that the governments of Britain and other Western countries were doing everything possible to prod Hitler into a war with the Soviet Union, that, being in a critical military situation and striving to save themselves from catastrophe, they were strongly interested in having the Germans attack the USSR. That was why Stalin distrusted the information he was getting from Western governments that Germany was about to attack the Soviet Union.

Let me recall a set of facts which, when reported to Stalin, were likely to heighten his distrust of the above warnings. I mean the secret negotiations with Nazi Germany in London in 1939, precisely when Britain, France and the USSR were holding military talks in Moscow.

British diplomats were offering the Nazis an agreement on dividing spheres of influence on a world scale. The British Minister of Trade, Hudson, said during his talks with Wohltat, a Nazi privy counselor close to Field Marshal Goering, that three extensive regions offering unlimited opportunities for economic activity — the British Empire, China and Russia — were open to the two countries. They discussed political and military issues, problems of procuring raw materials for Germany, and the like. Other persons joined the talks; the German Ambassador in London, Dirksen, confirmed in his report to Berlin the existence of "a tendency towards constructive policy among government quarters here".

Here I think it relevant to recall that when Hitler tried to offer the Soviet Union to discuss the idea of dividing the world into spheres of influence, he encountered a sharp and unequivocal refusal of the Soviet side, which would not even hear of the subject. This is borne out by documents and by the evidence of those who accompanied V.M. Molotov on his visit to Berlin in November 1940.

As is commonly known, Winston Churchill sent Stalin a message at the end of April 1941, which read in part:

"I have sure information from a trusted agent that when the Germans thought they had got Yugoslavia in the net — that

is to say, after March 20 — they began to move three out of the five Panzer divisions from Romania to Southern Poland. The moment they heard of the Serbian revolution this movement was countermanded. Your Excellency will readily appreciate the significance of these facts."

Stalin received the message with suspicion. In 1940 rumours had circulated in the world press that the British and French armed forces were themselves preparing to invade the North Caucasus and bomb Baku, Grozny and Maikop. Then there appeared documents confirming these rumours.

In short, not only the anti-Soviet and anti-communist views and utterances which Churchill never bothered to conceal, but also many concrete facts relating to diplomatic activity could have prejudiced Stalin against information from Western imperialist sources.

The spring of 1941 was marked by a new wave of false rumours in Western countries about large-scale Soviet war preparations against Germany. The German press raised a howl about them and complained that such information tended to throw a cloud on German-Soviet relations.

"Don't you see?" Stalin would say. "They are trying to frighten us with the Germans and to frighten the Germans with us, setting us one against the other."

As to the non-aggression pact concluded with Germany in 1939, at a time when our country might have been attacked on two fronts — by Germany and Japan — there are no grounds to think that Stalin had any illusions about it. The Party's Central Committee and the Soviet Government were aware that the pact did not relieve the USSR from the menace of fascist aggression, but enabled us to win time in a bid to strengthen our defences; more, it hindered the emergence of a united anti-Soviet front. At any rate I never heard Stalin express any reassuring views with reference to the non-aggression pact.

On May 5, 1941, Stalin addressed students of Red Army academies at a reception held in honour of the graduates.

After congratulating them on ending their studies, Stalin dwelt on the changes that had taken place lately in the army.

"Comrades," he said, "you left the army three or four years ago. Now when you return to its ranks you won't recognize

it. The Red Army is nothing like what it was a few years ago. We have built a new army and provided it with modern weapons. Our tanks, planes and artillery are different now. When you return to the army you will see many innovations."

Stalin went on to characterize the changes in the different arms and services.

"You will come to your units from the capital," Stalin continued. "Red Army men and commanders will ask you what is happening now. Why has France bowed in defeat? Why is England suffering defeat, and Germany winning? Is the German army really invincible?

"Military thought in the German army is advancing. The army has the latest weapons and equipment; it has been trained in new ways of warfare and has acquired great experience. It's a fact that Germany has the best army both in weaponry and in organization. But the Germans are making a mistake if they think that their army is an ideal, invincible army. There are no invincible armies. Germany cannot hope for success under slogans of aggressive, predatory war, under slogans of conquering other countries and subdueing other peoples and states."

Speaking of the causes of Germany's military successes in Europe, Stalin touched on the attitude to the army in some countries where due concern for the army was lacking and it received no moral support. It was then that a new morale appeared, corrupting the army. The military began to be regarded with contempt. The army should enjoy the concern and love of the people and government — this is the army's greatest moral force. The army should be cherished.

The military school must and can train the commanding personnel only with new weapons and equipment, and making wide use of the experience of modern war. After briefly outlining the tasks of gunners, tankmen, flyers, cavalrymen, signals men and infantry in a war, Stalin emphasized that we must repattern our propaganda, agitation and press.

"To prepare well for war," Stalin said, "it is not enough to have a modern army — it is necessary to prepare politically."

What conclusions, then, follow from the cited facts? How is one to assess what was done before the war, what we were about to do, and what we did not have time to do or were unable to do

to strengthen our country's defences? How to make that appraisal today after everything that we've gone through, looking critically at the past, and at the same time going back once more to the time shortly before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War?

It seems to me that the country's defence was managed correctly as regards its basic and principal features and orientations. For many years, everything or almost everything possible was done in the economic and social fields. As to the period from 1939 to the middle of 1941, the people and the Party applied special efforts to strengthen the country's defences.

Our advanced industry, the kolkhoz system, universal literacy, the unity of nations, the moral strength of the socialist state, the people's great patriotism, the Party's Leninist leadership — all of this uniting front and rear, was a powerful foundation for our immense country's defence capability, the original source of the great victory won in the fight against fascism.

The fact that in spite of enormous difficulties and losses during the four years of the war, from July 1941 to September 1945, Soviet industry turned out a colossal amount of armaments — more than 825,000 guns and mortars, nearly 103,000 tanks and self-propelled guns, over 134,000 military aircraft — shows that from the standpoint of military defence, the foundations of the economy had been laid correctly, dependably, and in good time.

Tracing once more in my mind's eye the development of the Soviet Armed Forces from the days of the Civil War, I would say that here, too, we mostly kept to the right road. There was constant improvement along the right lines in Soviet military doctrine, the principles of educating and training the troops, the weapons of the army and navy, the training of command personnel and the structure and organization of the armed forces. The morale and fighting spirit of the troops and their political consciousness and maturity were always exceptionally high.

Of course, if it were possible to go over that whole road once again, there are some things it would have been better not to do and some things that would have to be straightened

out. But today I cannot name a single major trend in the development of our armed forces that should have been written off, jettisoned, or repealed. The period between 1939 and the middle of 1941 was marked on the whole by transformations which gave the Soviet Union a brilliant army, and that readied it well for defence.

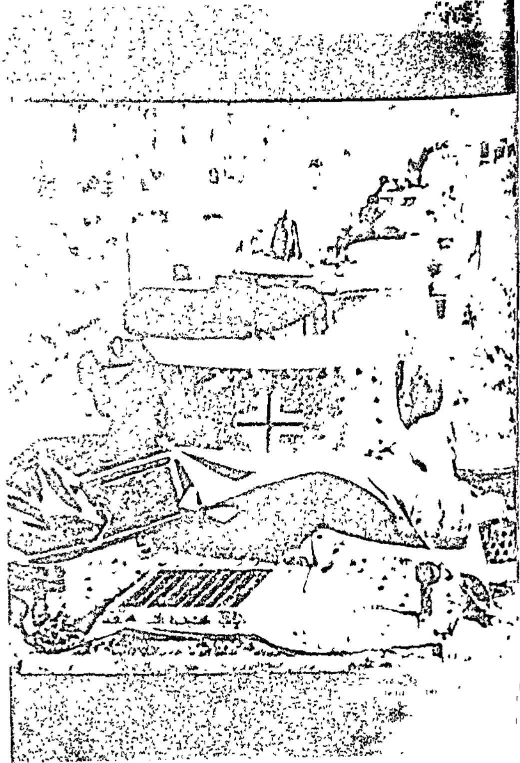
I write this not to disclaim part of the responsibility for the deficiencies of that period. Every sensible person will realize that even in the high post of Chief of General Staff it was impossible to achieve much in four and a half months. I have already spoken of some of my mistakes, and will speak of others in due course. But the important thing to me is to help the reader, especially the young reader, to grasp the true state of things.

History gave us too small a period of peace to get everything organized as it should be. We began many things correctly, and many other things we had had no time to complete. Our miscalculation regarding the possible time of Nazi Germany's attack had a telling effect. It lay at the root of the flaws in the preparations to repulse the first enemy onslaught.

The positive factors I have mentioned acted constantly, developing more broadly and powerfully throughout the war. And it was they that brought victory. The adverse factor — the miscalculation of the time—gradually lost its force, but it accentuated the enemy's objective advantages, added to them some temporary advantages, and thus caused the difficult situation in which we found ourselves at the beginning of the war.

In 1940 the Party and Government took a number of additional measures to strengthen the country's defence. However, the economic potential did not permit us to carry them out in full in such a short time. War caught the country in the stage of reorganizing, re-equipping and retraining the armed forces, in the stage of building up the necessary mobilization stores and state reserves. The Soviet people were not planning war, were striving to avoid it, putting all their efforts and resources into implementing their peaceful economic plans.

During the time the dangerous military situation was ripening, we army leaders should probably have done more to convince Stalin that war with Germany was inevitable in the very near future and that the urgent measures provided for in the operation-













We Shall Overcome!



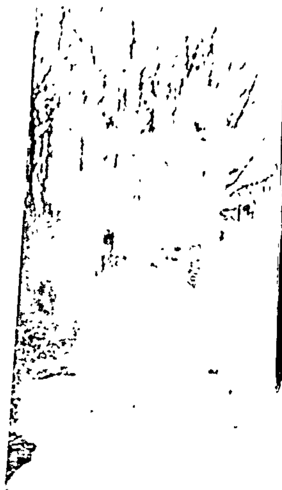
Panzers under fire

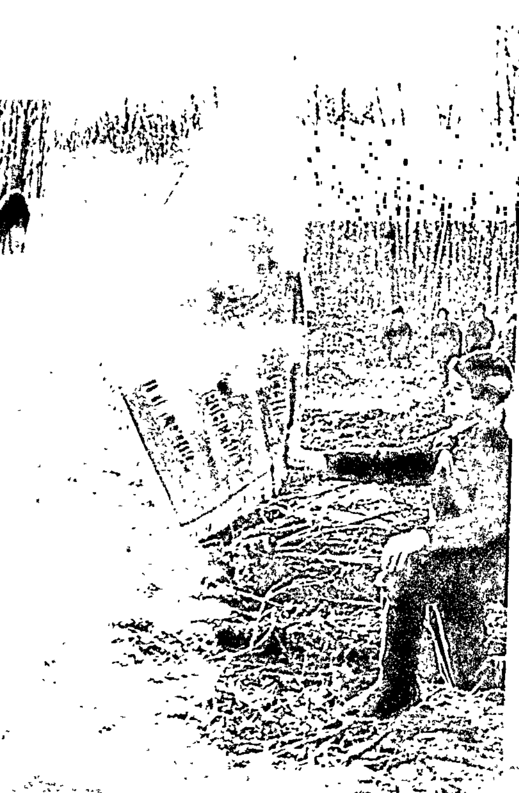
It's a people's war

A political officer



Allegiance to Party and Country









Charge!



The document outlined variants of the possible sectors where the German troops would strike when attacking the Soviet Union. As it turned out later, it accurately summarized the work on the Barbarossa Plan of the German Command, while one of the variants, in fact, contained the essence of the plan.

The report read: "Of the most probable military operations planned against the USSR, the following merits special attention:

"Variant No. 3, according to information ... relating to February 1941: 'For the attack on the USSR,' the message reads, 'three army groups are being set up: the Ist group under the command of General Field Marshal von Bock will strike in the direction of Petrograd; the 2nd group under the command of General Field Marshal von Rundstedt, in the direction of Moscow; and the 3rd group under the command of General Field Marshal von Leeb, in the direction of Kiev. The tentative date for beginning the attack on the USSR is May 20'.

"According to a message from our military attache of March 14," the report went on to say, "a German major said: 'We are changing our plan completely. We are going East, against the USSR. We will seize the USSR's grain, coal and oil. Then we will be invincible and carry on with the war against England and America...'"

Citing a message from the military attache in Berlin, the document says that "the beginning of military operations against the USSR may be expected between May 15 and June 15, 1941".

However the conclusions drawn from the information cited in the report actually nullified its importance and misled Stalin. General Golikov ends his report as follows:

"1. On the basis of all the aforesaid statements and possible variants of operations this spring I consider that the most probable time operations will begin against the USSR is after the victory over England or the conclusion with her of an honourable peace treaty.

"2. *Rumours and documents to the effect that war against the USSR is inevitable this spring should be regarded as misinformation coming from the English or perhaps even the German intelligence service.*" (My italics — G. Zh.)

On May 6, 1941, Admiral Kuznetsov, People's Commissar for the Navy, sent the following memorandum to Stalin:

"Our naval attache in Berlin, Captain Ist Class Vorontsov, reports that ... according to a German officer from Hitler's General Headquarters the Germans are preparing to invade the USSR on May 14 through Finland, the Baltic area and Romania.

"Simultaneously powerful air raids are planned on Moscow and Leningrad and airborne troops are to be landed at border centres..."

The information contained in this document was also exceptionally valuable, but again Admiral Kuznetsov's conclusions were contrary to the facts he had himself cited, and misinformed Stalin.

He wrote: *"I consider that this information is false and was specially sent through this channel so that the Germans could see how the USSR would react."* (My italics — *G. Zh.*)

Similar reports came from Dekanozov, the Soviet Ambassador in Germany. Not only did he send Stalin word through the appropriate channels that there was no threat of an attack; on the very eve of the war, he permitted the families of many of the staff members of the Embassy and Trade Mission to come to Berlin, and they were all arrested by the Nazis in the early hours of June 22. Stalin relied on all these false reports coming to him through the appropriate channels.

Did the Defence Commissariat and the General Staff know anything about the reports Stalin was getting through these channels? After the war, Marshal Timoshenko assured me that he, at any rate, had known nothing about them. And I, too, declare as the then Chief of General Staff, that I had no knowledge of them.

Since the war's end, the press would come out with the version that we had had knowledge of Plan Barbarossa before the war broke out, and that we knew the direction of the main strikes, the deployment frontage of the German troops, their strength and equipment. In so doing, the press referred to well-known Soviet intelligence agents — Richard Sorge, for one, and many others in Switzerland, Britain, and a number of other countries, who are said to have provided this information. Yet, the press complained, our political and military leadership

had not gone into the substance of the reports and had, indeed, rejected them.

I take full responsibility for saying that this is pure fiction. As far as I know, neither the Soviet Government, nor the People's Commissariat for Defence, nor the General Staff had any such information.

*Tension kept mounting. And the greater loomed the threat of* war, the tenser worked the leading personnel of the People's Commissariat for Defence and the General Staff. Indeed, the leading members of the Commissariat and General Staff, and especially Marshal Timoshenko, worked 18 or 19 hours a day at that time, and often remained in their offices all night.

On June 13, Timoshenko phoned Stalin in my presence and asked permission to alert the troops of the border districts, and to deploy the first echelons according to the cover plans.

"We will think it over," Stalin replied.

The next day we visited Stalin and informed him of the general anxiety and the necessity of alerting the troops.

"You propose carrying out a mobilization, alerting the troops and moving them to the western borders? But that means war! Don't you two understand that?"

Still, Stalin asked:

"How many divisions have we in the Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa Military Districts?"

We told him that by July 1 there would be 149 divisions and one separate rifle brigade in the four western border military districts, distributed as follows:

Baltic District — 19 rifle, 4 tank, and 2 motorized divisions, and 1 separate brigade;

Western District — 24 rifle, 12 tank, 6 motorized and 2 cavalry divisions;

Kiev District — 32 rifle, 16 tank, 8 motorized and 2 cavalry divisions;

Odessa District — 13 rifle, 4 tank, 2 motorized and 3 cavalry divisions.

"Well, is that little?" Stalin said. "According to our information the Germans do not have so many troops."

I informed him that according to intelligence the German divisions were manned and armed at wartime strength. The strength of a division ranged from 14,000 to 16,000 men. Our

divisions, even those of 8,000 men, were, in effect, only half as strong as the German divisions.

Stalin remarked:

"You can't believe everything intelligence says..."

During this conversation with Stalin, his secretary A. N. Poskrebyshev came in and said N. S. Khrushchev was on the line from Kiev. Stalin picked up the phone. We gathered from his replies that the call concerned agriculture.

"Fine," Stalin said, and smiled.

Evidently, Khrushchev had reported in glowing terms about the good prospects of a bumper crop...

We left the Kremlin with a heavy heart.

I decided to walk a little way. My thoughts were depressing. In the Alexandrov Garden beside the Kremlin wall children were romping about without a care in the world. I thought of my own little girls, and realized keenly what an immense responsibility we all bore for the children, for their future, for the whole country.

Every peacetime has its peculiar features, its atmosphere, its charm, but I want to say a good word about those prewar days. They were marked by a unique enthusiasm and optimism, a sort of inspiration and at the same time a new sense of efficiency, modesty and simplicity in relations between people. A good life, a very good life, indeed, was beginning.

What economist, philosopher or writer can paint an authentic picture of how our country would flourish today, how far we would have advanced, had not war interrupted the broad, peaceful and mighty current of those years...

I have already spoken of the measures taken in order not to give Germany a pretext to start a war. The People's Commissar for Defence, the General Staff and the commanders of border military districts were warned that they would be held responsible for the consequences of any imprudent actions of our troops. We were categorically forbidden to move troops to the forward lines under the border cover plan without Stalin's personal permission.

Commissar for Defence Timoshenko advised district commanders to hold tactical exercises in the direction of border and in this way bring troops up closer to the deployment areas specified in the cover plans. The districts carried out the

Defence Commissar's recommendation but with one important omission: a substantial part of the artillery took no part in the exercises.

The divisional, corps and anti-aircraft artillery had not yet had range firing and was not ready for combat at the beginning of 1941. Accordingly, the district commanders decided to send part of the artillery to ranges for practice. As a result, some corps and divisions of the covering forces were without a considerable part of their artillery when Nazi Germany attacked.

On June 21, in the evening, Lieutenant-General Purkayev, Chief of Staff of the Kiev Military District, telephoned to inform me that a German sergeant-major had come to our frontier guards and said that German troops were moving to jumping-off areas and that the attack would begin in the morning of June 22.

I at once informed the Defence Commissar and Stalin of what Lieutenant-General Purkayev had reported. Stalin said to come to the Kremlin with the People's Commissar.

Taking with me a draft of the directive for the troops I went to the Kremlin along with the Commissar and Lieutenant-General Vatutin. On the way we agreed that at all costs we must get permission to alert the troops.

Stalin was alone when he received us. He was plainly worried.

"The German generals may have sent this turncoat to provoke a conflict," he said.

"No," Timoshenko replied. "We think he is telling the truth."

At that moment members of the Politbureau came in.

"What are we to do?" Stalin asked.

No one answered.

"A directive must immediately be given to alert all troops in the border districts," Timoshenko said.

"Read it!" Stalin replied.

I read the draft directive. Stalin said:

"It's too early to issue such a directive — perhaps the question can still be settled peacefully. We must give a short directive stating that an attack may begin with provocative actions by the German forces. The troops of the border districts must not fall for any provocation, and avoid complications."

Vatutin and I went into the next room and quickly drew up a draft of the directive to be sent by the People's Commissar.

We then returned to the office and asked for permission to read the directive.

Stalin listened to it then read it over again making amendments, and finally gave it to the People's Commissar to sign.

In view of its importance, I cite the directive in full:

"To the Military Councils of the Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa Military Districts.

"Copy: To the People's Commissar of the Navy.

"1. During 22-23.6.41 a sudden German attack is possible on the fronts of the Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa Military Districts. The attack may begin with provocative actions.

"2. The task of our troops is not to be incited by any provocative action that may cause serious complications. At the same time, the troops of the Leningrad, Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa Military Districts are to be in full combat readiness to meet a possible sudden strike by the Germans or their allies.

"3. I order that:

"a) during the early hours of 22.6.41 the firing posts in fortified areas on the state border are to be secretly manned;

"b) before dawn on 22.6.41 all aircraft, including army aviation, are to be dispersed among field aerodromes, and carefully camouflaged;

"c) all units are to be put on the alert. Forces are to be kept dispersed and camouflaged;

"d) air defence is to be alerted without additional involvement of unit reservists. All preparations are to be made for blacking out cities and other targets;

"e) no other measures are to be taken without further specific orders.

Timoshenko, Zhukov

"21.6.41."

Vatutin took the directive to the General Staff, whence it was to be immediately transmitted to the districts. Transmission to the districts was completed at 00:30, June 22, 1941. A copy of the directive was forwarded to the People's Commissar of the Navy.

Timoshenko and I were returning from Stalin's office with an odd feeling of duality.

On the one hand, it seemed we had done everything we could to be prepared for the imminent military threat: a number of large-scale organizational measures were carried out to ensure mobilization; the western military districts, which would have to be the first to engage the enemy, had been strengthened as much as possible; lastly, we had just been authorized to issue a directive alerting the troops of the border military districts. On the other hand, the German troops could launch the offensive next morning, while we had not completed a number of most important measures. This would seriously complicate the struggle with the experienced and strong enemy. The directive that the General Staff was transmitting to the military districts at that moment could come too late.

It was long since dark. The day of June 21 was drawing to a close. Timoshenko and I kept silent all the way to the Commissariat, but I could feel that he was troubled by the same alarming thoughts. We alighted from the car and arranged to meet in his study in ten minutes.

## Chapter 10

## THE WAR BEGINS

On June 21, 1941, all personnel of the General Staff and the Defence Commissariat were ordered to stay on the job overnight. The directive ordering maximum combat preparedness of frontier troops had to be promptly transmitted to the military districts. The People's Commissar for Defence and I were conducting incessant telephone conversations with the district commanders and their chiefs of staff, who reported hearing increasing noises on the other side of the border. They were getting this information from border guards and forward units covering the frontier.

At about midnight Commander of the Kiev District Kirponos reported over the high frequency telephone (HF) from his command post at Ternopol that another German soldier had appeared in our lines besides the turncoat previously mentioned by General Purkayev. He was from the 222nd Infantry Regiment of the 74th Infantry Division. Having swum the river, he presented himself to our border guards, and told them the German troops were going to mount an offensive at 4 a. m. Kirponos was ordered to speed up transmission of the alert directive to all units.

Everything pointed to the German forces moving up to the frontier. At 30 minutes past midnight we notified Stalin of this. Stalin inquired whether the directive had been sent to all districts. I replied in the affirmative.

Various stories were circulated after Stalin's death that on the night of June 21-22 some commanders and their staffs were either peacefully asleep or making merry without a suspicion that anything was amiss. This is not true. The last night of peace was quite different. As I have already said,

on our return from the Kremlin, the Commissar for Defence and I spoke over the HF with District commanders Kuznetsov, Pavlov, Kirponos, and their chiefs of staff, and all of them were at their command posts.

Near dawn on June 22, Vatutin and I were with Defence Commissar Timoshenko in his office.

At 03:07 hours I was called over the HF by Admiral F. S. Oktyabrsky, Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, who said that the fleet's aircraft warning system had reported the approach from the sea of large numbers of unidentified aircraft. The fleet was at full alert. The admiral requested instructions.

"What have you decided to do?" I asked him.

"There is only one thing to do: fire on the planes with the fleet's anti-aircraft batteries."

After a brief exchange with Timoshenko, I said to Oktyabrsky: "Act and report to your People's Commissar."

At 3:30 hours the Chief of Staff of the Western District, General V. Ye. Klimovskikh, reported a German air raid on towns in Byelorussia. About three minutes later the Chief of Staff of the Kiev District, General M. A. Purkayev, reported an air strike on Ukrainian towns. At 3:40 the Commander of the Baltic District, General F. I. Kuznetsov, called to report enemy air raids on Kaunas and other towns.

The Defence Commissar said I should phone Stalin. I started calling. No one answered. I kept calling. Finally, I heard the sleep-laden voice of the general on duty at the security section. I asked him to call Stalin to the phone.

"What? Now? Comrade Stalin is asleep."

"Wake him at once. The Germans are bombing our towns!"

About three minutes later Stalin picked up the receiver. I reported the situation and requested permission to start retaliatory action. Stalin was silent. I heard the sound of his breathing.

"Did you hear me?"

Silence again.

At last Stalin asked:

"Where is the Defence Commissar?"

"Talking with the Kiev District on the HF."

"You and him come to the Kremlin. Tell Poskrebyshev to summon all Politbureau members."

At 4 a.m. I had another talk with Admiral Oktyabrsky. In a calm voice he reported: "The enemy attack has been beaten off. The attempted strike has failed. There has been some damage in the city, however."

The Black Sea Fleet under Admiral Oktyabrsky was one of our first military formations to put up organized resistance to the enemy.

At 04:10 hours the Western and Baltic Districts reported that the Germans had mounted armed actions on the ground.

At 04:30, Timoshenko and I arrived at the Kremlin. All Politbureau members were assembled. The Defence Commissar and I were called in. Stalin, his face white, was sitting at the table cradling a tobacco-filled pipe in his hand. He said:

"We must immediately phone the German Embassy."

The Embassy replied that Ambassador Count von der Schulenburg requested to be received to deliver an urgent message.

Molotov was authorized to receive him.

Meanwhile, the First Deputy Chief of General Staff Vatutin passed word that following a strong artillery barrage German land forces had mounted an assault at several points of the North-Western and Western sectors.

A while later Molotov strode into the office and said:

"The German Government has declared war on us."

Stalin sank into his chair, deep in thought.

There was a long and pregnant silence.

I decided to risk breaking it and suggested crashing down on the attackers with the full strength of our frontier districts, and hold up any further enemy advance.

"Annihilate, not hold up," Timoshenko corrected me.

"Issue a directive," said Stalin.

At 07:15 hours on June 22, the Defence Commissar's Directive No.2 was communicated to the districts. However, considering the balance of strength and the obtaining situation it proved plainly unrealistic — and was therefore never carried out.

On returning to the Defence Commissariat, Timoshenko and I learned that just before daybreak on June 22 cable communication lines had been cut in all the western frontier districts; the headquarters of districts and armies had no way to promptly transmit their instructions. Specially dispatched

German agents and saboteurs had been cutting cables, killing repairmen, and attacking troop commanders. As I have already said, most units in the frontier districts had no radio facilities.

From various sources district headquarters began receiving the most contradictory, frequently provocative reports.

The General Staff was unable to obtain credible information from district headquarters and field commands, and this, naturally, placed the High Command and the General Staff in a very awkward situation.

By 8 a. m. on June 22 the General Staff finally pieced together the following:

a powerful enemy bomb strike, hitting airfields in the Western, Kiev and Baltic Special Military Districts, inflicted serious damage on our aircraft, which had been unable to take off and disperse to field airstrips;

many towns and railway junctions in the Baltic area, Byelorussia and the Ukraine, and the naval bases at Sebastopol and on the Baltic coast, had been bombed;

bitter fighting was going on against German land forces along our entire western frontier. On many sectors the Germans had already engaged forward units of the Red Army;

alerted infantry units belonging to the first echelon covering the frontier were going into battle on the march, failing to take up prepared positions;

on the sector of the Leningrad Military District things were so far quiet and the enemy had done nothing.

At about 09:00 Timoshenko phoned Stalin and asked for permission to come to the Kremlin and present a draft Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on nationwide mobilization and the establishment of the High Command Stavka, and on several other measures.

The short distance from the Defence Commissariat to the Kremlin was covered by the Commissar's car and mine at top speed. I was accompanied by Vatutin, First Deputy Chief of General Staff, who had a map showing the strategic situation. As we drove, I was true to my old habit of checking if I had taken all the requisite papers: they were not many, but included the draft of a decision to form a High Command Stavka — the top body to direct the military operations of our armed

forces. The document had been drawn up in advance by the General Staff and okayed by the Defence Commissar.

We were met by Poskrebyshev, who took us at once to Stalin's office. Members of the Politbureau were on the spot. The atmosphere was tense. Silence reigned in the room.

Joseph Stalin was walking up and down, an unlit pipe clasped in his hand.

"Well, what have you got there?" he asked.

Timoshenko reported on the draft project on a High Command Stavka. Stalin looked at the paper but took no decision. He laid it on his desk, and said curtly:

"The Politbureau will discuss it."

Then he inquired about the situation, and said:

"Molotov is making a radio address at noon."

Having read the General Staff's draft on Mobilization Decree and after reducing it in length, Stalin handed it to Poskrebyshev for approval by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. From June 23 reservists born in 1905-1918 in fourteen, that is, in nearly all the military districts, except the Central Asian, Trans-Baikal and Far Eastern, were to be called up, and martial law declared in the European part of the country. All functions of the state relating to defence, public order and national security were to be taken over by the military authorities. They were authorized to enlist people and all means of transport for building fortifications and guarding major military and civilian installations.

On June 22 the Baltic, Western, and Kiev Special Military Districts were transformed into the North-Western, Western and South-Western Fronts.

At about 13:00 on June 22, Stalin telephoned me:

"Our Front commanders lack combat experience and are evidently a bit confused. The Politbureau has decided to send you to the South-Western Front as representative of the High Command. We are sending Shaposhnikov and Kulik to the Western Front. I summoned them and gave them the pertinent instructions. You are to fly to Kiev at once, and then proceed to Front Headquarters in Ternopol together with Khrushchev."

"Who is going to run the General Staff in this difficult situation?" I asked.

Stalin replied:

"Leave Vatutin in your place." And he added irascibly: "Don't lose time, we'll get along somehow."

I phoned my family to tell them not to wait for me, and in 40 minutes I was airborne. Then only did I remember that I had had nothing to eat since yesterday. The flyers helped out, treating me to strong tea and sandwiches.

By the end of the day I was at the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party in Kiev, where Khrushchev was waiting for me. He told me it was dangerous to go any further by air. German airmen were chasing transport planes. We would go by car. Having received the latest news on the situation from Vatutin over the HF we left for Ternopol, where Colonel-General Kirponos, Commander of the South-Western Front, had his command post.

We arrived at the command post late at night, and I immediately got in touch with Vatutin on the HF.

Here is what he told me:

By the end of June 22, despite vigorous measures, the General Staff had failed to receive accurate information about our forces and the enemy from Front, Army and air force headquarters. The information on the depth of enemy penetration was contradictory. There was no precise data on losses in the air force and land forces. All he knew was that the aviation of the Western Front had sustained very heavy losses. The General Staff and the People's Commissar for Defence had been unable to make contact with Front Commanders Kuznetsov and Pavlov, who had gone to the troops without reporting to the Commissar for Defence. The headquarters of the Fronts did not know where their commanding officers were at that moment.

According to air reconnaissance, battles were being fought in our fortified zones and partially 15 to 20 km inside our territory. Front headquarters could not contact local commands as there was neither cable nor radio communication with most of the armies and separate corps.

Then General Vatutin told me Stalin had endorsed the Defence Commissar's draft Directive No.3 and had ordered my signature to be affixed to it.

"What Directive is that?" I inquired.

"The Directive instructs our troops to mount a counter-offensive with the task of routing the enemy in all major directions and advancing into enemy territory."

"But we still don't know exactly where the enemy is striking and in what strength," I objected. "Wouldn't it be better to find out what is actually going on at the front by tomorrow morning and then adopt the requisite decision?"

"I think you are right, but the thing is settled."

"All right," I said, "put down my signature."

This Directive was received by the Commander of the South-Western Front sometime around midnight. As I had expected, the Front's Chief of Staff M. A. Purkayev objected sharply. He believed the Front had neither manpower nor materiel to carry it out.

After a detailed discussion at the Military Council of the Front I suggested that Kirponos should for the time being order the mechanized corps to concentrate their forces and strike back at the enemy's major Army Group South which had broken through in the Sokal area. This counterattack should be supported by the entire aviation at the disposal of the Front and a portion of the High Command's long-range bomber aircraft. The Command and Staff of the Front swiftly drafted preliminary operational instructions, and communicated them to the armies and corps.

Credit is due to the brilliant organizational skills and level-headedness of the Front Chief of Staff, M. A. Purkayev, and the Chief of Operations I. Kh. Bagramyan, displayed in the highly strained situation of that first day of war.

By 9 a. m. on the following day, June 23, we arrived at the command post of the 8th Mechanized Corps under Lieutenant-General D. I. Ryabyshev. I knew him well from serving together in the Kiev Special Military District. It was easy to guess by the look of the corps commander and his staff officers that they had come a long and hard way. They had, in fact, moved very swiftly from the Drogobych area to the area of Brody, and were in high spirits. Looking at Ryabyshev and his staff officers I thought of the glorious 11th Tank Brigade and its commanding officer, the gallant Brigade Commander M. P. Yakovlev, and recalled how they had pounded the enemy on Mount Bain-Tsagan on the Khalkhin Gol in 1939.

"These men will fight just as well, surely," I thought. "So long as we are not too late with our counterattack..."

Ryabyshev showed me on the map where and how the corps was deployed. Briefly, he reported on the condition of the units.

"The corps needs a day for complete concentration, checking of materiel and replenishment of stocks," he said. "Within that time there will be reconnaissance in force. We will organize control of the corps. Therefore, the corps will be capable of going into action in full strength by the morning of June 24."

"Good," I said. "It would, of course, be better to deliver a counterblow together with the 9th, 19th and 22nd Mechanized corps, but unfortunately they are late in arriving at their departure areas. And the situation will not allow us to wait for their complete deployment. In executing its counterblow the 8th Mechanized Corps may be expected to come up against a powerful enemy tank and anti-tank artillery screen. There must, therefore, be thorough reconnaissance of the terrain and of the enemy forces."

Ryabyshev was just about to tell me something when an air alarm was sounded.

"A fine kettle of fish," Ryabyshev uttered quietly. "And we haven't yet got any dugouts ready. So, Comrade General, you and I will just have to pretend we are in a shelter."

"You were just about to say something, weren't you?" I said.

"I was going to suggest we go and have a bite."

"Not a bad idea. I believe I have something in my car."

At that point the corps chief of staff and other staff officers entered the tent. They had barely introduced themselves when we all heard the characteristic whine of a German dive bomber, followed by the sound of bombs exploding nearby. I glanced at Ryabyshev and his fellow officers. Their faces showed nothing but businesslike concentration. They were obviously feeling as they would at a field exercise.

"Good fellows," I thought. "You can't lose a war with their kind..."

After settling all cardinal issues with the corps commander, we were back in Ternopol at the Front command post before dusk.

Lieutenant-General Purkayev, Front Chief of Staff, and Colonel-General Kirponos, the Front Commander, reported:

"Fighting in all sectors of the Front. The major, and exceedingly bitter, battle is being fought in the area of Brody-Dubno-Vladimir Volynsky. The 9th and 19th Mechanized corps will be assembling in the forests in the area of Rovno on June 25."

"We have decided not to await the complete concentration of the corps and mount a counterattack at Klevan and Dubno on June 24," the Front Commander added. "The Commander of the 5th Army must pool the resources of the 9th and 19th Mechanized corps, as well as those of the 22nd, and provide them with the necessary assistance."

It was a reasonable decision and I agreed with the Fror Command, suggesting, however, that they verify liaison be tween the corps and Front aviation.

On June 24 Ryabyshev's 8th Mechanized Corps mountec an offensive towards Berestechko. We pinned great hopes or the corps. It had been better equipped with the latest tanks than the others and was fairly well trained. The 15th Mechanized Corps under General Karpezo was advancing east of Radekhov. The attack by these corps and, in particular, the successful actions of the 8th Mechanized Corps soon made a telling impact on the German forces. This was especially true after the rout of the Nazi 57th Infantry Division which had been covering the right flank of the 48th Motorized Corps of von Kleist's group.

A rather grave situation developed that day for the German 48th Mechanized Corps. They were compelled to throw in all their aviation to save themselves from being crushed. They were forced to bring up the 44th Army Corps and other units.

On that day Colonel-General Halder, Chief of Staff of German Land Forces, wrote the following in his service diary: "The enemy keeps bringing up new and fresh forces from the rear against our tank thrust... As was expected, the enemy has passed into an offensive in considerable tank strength against the southern flank of the 1st Tank Group. Troop movement has been registered on several sectors."

Thus the forces of our South-Western Front successfully dealt one of their first counterblows. It could have been more power-

ful had the Front Command greater air strength at its disposal to act in cooperation with the mechanized corps and at least another one or two infantry corps.

While at the command post of the South-Western Front we naturally devoted our attention to the Dubno sector, the site of the main fighting in the Ukraine.

From a telephone conversation with the 6th Army Commander, General I. N. Muzychenko, and the 26th Army Commander, General F. Y. Kostenko, I learned that the advancing German 17th Army had delivered its main blow in the direction of Lvov.

Below is a transcript of a telephone conversation with Lieutenant-General Kostenko at 10:30 to 10:55 in the morning of June 25, 1941.

Zhukov. I have a few questions. Are you maintaining contact with the left flank of the 97th Rifle Division?

Kostenko. Last night I sent a squad and made contact with the division in the Yavoruv area; that's the area where 6th Corps has its HQ.

Zhukov. Where is the right flank of the 99th Rifle Division?

Kostenko. The right flank has now turned east of Gusaku.

Zhukov. Where are your reserves, and how large are they?

Kostenko. Two regiments are about to arrive. One regiment, withdrawn from the front lines, is to reach Dobromil by 11:00 hours on the 25th, and the other, also withdrawn from the front lines, is on its way to the Sambor area and is just approaching Khyrov.

My reserve battalion and twelve tanks are on their way to cover Sambor in the north and reconnoitre in the direction of Mostsisk...

Zhukov. Who has Peremyshl?

Kostenko. It's in our hands...

Zhukov. What do you think is the strength of the enemy facing you?

Kostenko: The 99th Division is faced by up to two infantry divisions and a force of some 200 motorcycles; along the rest of the front there are up to two divisions — what's more, they're mountain troops.

Zhukov: Thanks. Now I know. At the moment I'm Comrade Kirponos's command post. Best wishes. Have you questions?

Kostenko: I want to ask the Front Commander to let have at least one tank regiment. It's really needed!

Zhukov: We'll think about it.

Kostenko. Army HQ has no liaison planes.

Zhukov: We'll make a note of that, too, and try to fi something for you. Do you know the situation?

Kostenko: I know the situation, for I have wire commu nications with the 6th Army.

Zhukov: Fine. Goodbye.

It was clear to me that as usual, Kostenko was sure to do the job he had been entrusted with, and would stake all his energy and ability — and his life if necessary — to do it.

Captured Germans testified that after seizing Rava-Russkaya their command had planned to send its 14th Motorized Corps into action.

The Rava-Russkaya fortified zone had been defended from the very first minutes of the war by the 35th and 140th Separate Machine-Gun battalions, the 41st Rifle Division under Major-General G. N. Mikushev, and Major Y. D. Maly's detachment of frontier guards.

The command of the German 17th Army had deployed five infantry divisions in this sector. Despite the formidable shelling, the air strikes and sustained attacks, the enemy had been unsuccessful in its bid to capture the Rava-Russkaya fortified zone and break the resistance of the 41st Division. In the afternoon of June 22, the 41st Division, which incorporated two artillery regiments, was reinforced with the 209th Corps Artillery Regiment armed with 152-mm guns. On that day enemy forces sustained heavy losses without achieving their goal.

The Peremyshl fortified area was held by the 52nd and 150th Separate Machine-Gun battalions and the 92nd Frontier Guard Detachment. They had occupied their emplacements by 6 o'clock in the morning of June 22. Together with the frontier guard troops and armed volunteer detachments, they were

the first to be engaged by the enemy. For several hours the gallant defenders of the city repelled the onslaught of a superior enemy force. Then the commander of the 92nd Frontier Guard Detachment ordered them to withdraw to the city's outskirts, where they once again delayed the enemy. This gave the 99th Infantry Division under Colonel N. I. Dementiev time to reach Peremyshl. On June 23, acting in conjunction with a composite frontier guard battalion, it delivered a counterblow and threw the Nazis out of the city.

On June 23 the Germans renewed their attacks, which were particularly severe on the Rava-Russkaya sector. In some places enemy units succeeded in penetrating the defences of the 41st Division, but thanks to firm control by General Mikushev the enemy was thrown back to his starting positions by a successful counterattack. However, by the close of that day the enemy dealt a powerful blow at the boundary between the Rava-Russkaya and Peremyshl areas defended by the 97th and 159th Rifle divisions. The 159th, which was then being deployed, had considerable numbers of untrained reservists in its ranks and unable to withstand the enemy attacks, began a withdrawal, thus gravely endangering adjacent units. The countermeasures taken by the 6th Army Commander General Muzychenko failed to remedy the situation and by the close of June 24 the gap in the defences was 40 km wide.

The Rava-Russkaya and Peremyshl fortified areas were still successfully beating back enemy attacks. Inlicting considerable losses on the enemy, the 99th Division did not yield a single metre of its positions. For its heroic actions, the 99th was conferred the Order of the Red Banner. Equally successful was the 41st Rifle Division. It was due exclusively to the deep intrusion of sizeable enemy forces in the sector defended by the 159th Division and the ensuing threat of the fortified area's being outflanked, that the Front Command ordered the 41st Division to withdraw to the rearward line of defence before dawn on June 27.

As to the 99th Rifle Division, it was holding Peremyshl during June 23-28. Not until the morning of June 29 was it ordered by the command to abandon the city.

On June 25-26, fighting continued with mounting intensity. The enemy threw in a powerful air force. Fierce battles were

Zhukov: Thanks. Now I know. At the moment I'm at Comrade Kirponos's command post. Best wishes. Have you any questions?

Kostenko: I want to ask the Front Commander to let me have at least one tank regiment. It's really needed!

Zhukov: We'll think about it.

Kostenko. Army HQ has no liaison planes.

Zhukov: We'll make a note of that, too, and try to find something for you. Do you know the situation?

Kostenko: I know the situation, for I have wire communications with the 6th Army.

Zhukov: Fine. Goodbye.

It was clear to me that as usual, Kostenko was sure to do the job he had been entrusted with, and would stake all his energy and ability — and his life if necessary — to do it.

Captured Germans testified that after seizing Rava-Russkaya their command had planned to send its 14th Motorized Corps into action.

The Rava-Russkaya fortified zone had been defended from the very first minutes of the war by the 35th and 140th Separate Machine-Gun battalions, the 41st Rifle Division under Major-General G. N. Mikushev, and Major Y. D. Maly's detachment of frontier guards.

The command of the German 17th Army had deployed five infantry divisions in this sector. Despite the formidable shelling, the air strikes and sustained attacks, the enemy had been unsuccessful in its bid to capture the Rava-Russkaya fortified zone and break the resistance of the 41st Division. In the afternoon of June 22, the 41st Division, which incorporated two artillery regiments, was reinforced with the 209th Corps Artillery Regiment armed with 152-mm guns. On that day enemy forces sustained heavy losses without achieving their goal.

The Peremyshl fortified area was held by the 52nd and 150th Separate Machine-Gun battalions and the 92nd Frontier Guard Detachment. They had occupied their emplacements by 6 o'clock in the morning of June 22. Together with the frontier guard troops and armed volunteer detachments, they were

the first to be engaged by the enemy. For several hours the gallant defenders of the city repelled the onslaught of a superior enemy force. Then the commander of the 92nd Frontier Guard Detachment ordered them to withdraw to the city's outskirts, where they once again delayed the enemy. This gave the 99th Infantry Division under Colonel N. I. Dementiev time to reach Peremyshl. On June 23, acting in conjunction with a composite frontier guard battalion, it delivered a counterblow and threw the Nazis out of the city.

On June 23 the Germans renewed their attacks, which were particularly severe on the Rava-Russkaya sector. In some places enemy units succeeded in penetrating the defences of the 41st Division, but thanks to firm control by General Mikushev the enemy was thrown back to his starting positions by a successful counterattack. However, by the close of that day the enemy dealt a powerful blow at the boundary between the Rava-Russkaya and Peremyshl areas defended by the 97th and 159th Rifle divisions. The 159th, which was then being deployed, had considerable numbers of untrained reservists in its ranks and unable to withstand the enemy attacks, began a withdrawal, thus gravely endangering adjacent units. The countermeasures taken by the 6th Army Commander General Muzychenko failed to remedy the situation and by the close of June 24 the gap in the defences was 40 km wide.

The Rava-Russkaya and Peremyshl fortified areas were still successfully beating back enemy attacks. Inflicting considerable losses on the enemy, the 99th Division did not yield a single metre of its positions. For its heroic actions, the 99th was conferred the Order of the Red Banner. Equally successful was the 41st Rifle Division. It was due exclusively to the deep intrusion of sizeable enemy forces in the sector defended by the 159th Division and the ensuing threat of the fortified area's being outflanked, that the Front Command ordered the 41st Division to withdraw to the rearward line of defence before dawn on June 27.

As to the 99th Rifle Division, it was holding Peremyshl during June 23-28. Not until the morning of June 29 was it ordered by the command to abandon the city.

On June 25-26, fighting continued with mounting intensity. The enemy threw in a powerful air force. Fierce battles were

fought in the air and on the ground. Both sides were suffering heavy losses. Frequently, the German airmen would simply flinch in the face of the bold attacks of our pilots, and fly back to their airfields.

Following the appearance of the enemy's forward units in the Dubno area, General Ryabyshev was ordered to turn his 8th Corps to confront them. The 15th Mechanized Corps engaged its main forces in the general direction of Berestechko and on to Dubno. The approaching 36th Rifle and 19th Mechanized corps were also proceeding to the Dubno area and fierce fighting ensued there on June 27. The Germans at once reinforced their troops with the 55th Army Corps, saving their Dubno group from a complete rout. Sustaining heavy losses, the enemy was compelled to withdraw forces from other sectors and move them towards Dubno.

Our troops were unable to smash the enemy and arrest his advance altogether. But the main job had been done: the enemy shock force thrusting towards Kiev was held up in the Brody-Dubno area and seriously weakened.

At 5 p.m. on June 24, I spoke over a Baudot system telegraph with the Commander of the 5th Army, General M. I. Potapov.

Before setting forth the substance of this conversation, I want to point out that Mikhail Potapov was a highly experienced general who had had good combat training in the Khalkhin Gol battles. He was a brave and cool-headed army commander, and it was not for nothing that the 5th Army was very well known to the German High Command which had felt its painful strikes on more than one occasion.

I shall now briefly describe our conversation, quite typical for the first days of the war.

**Zhukov:** Report the situation.

**Potapov:** On the Vladova-Ustilug front there are up to five infantry divisions and up to 2,000 panzers.[1]

The main group of enemy panzers is advancing on the Dubenka-Gorodlo sector. From Ustilug to Sokal there are up to six infantry divisions together with the 14th Panzer Division. The

[1] The number of panzers proved to be grossly exaggerated — *Author.*

main direction of this division is Vladimir-Volynsky and Lutsk. On the boundary between the 5th and 6th armies are mechanized units of undetermined strength. The enemy is levelling his main blow at Vladimir-Volynsky and Lutsk, with an auxiliary strike from Brest-Litovsk towards Kovel.

I am reporting the position of the Army's units as at 14:20 hours on 24.6.41:

Fedyuninsky is holding positions along the Pulemets-Kusnishchi-Vishnev-Nikitichi line. Two regiments of his 87th Rifle Division are holding fortified points at Ustilug; they have been encircled and are short of ammunition.

I have no information since yesterday about the 124th Division.

The 41st Tank Division is in the Matseyuv-Koshary area, putting its vehicles in order after battle.

The 135th Division in cooperation with the 19th Tank Division and one regiment of the 87th Rifle Division supported by the 1st Anti-Tank Brigade and all the corps artillery has been attacking in the Vladimir-Volynsky direction since 14:00 hours.

Lutsk has a perimeter defence, but it is highly ragged. What I am afraid of is a panzer strike from the south towards Lutsk, which will create the risk of a battle on two fronts.

I have absolutely no strength with which to parry southward...

I request stronger support by bombers and that crossings of panzer units on the Dubenka-Gorodlo line should be prevented. I ask, too, that the advancing panzer units from Brest-Litovsk should be held up and that strafers and fighters support us in destroying the enemy group in the Vladimir-Volynsky area.

I have no reserves. The 9th Mechanized Corps can assemble up to 200 old tanks in the Olyk area no sooner than in two days' time.

Telephone communications have been destroyed everywhere. As soon as we repair them the enemy air force demolishes them again. I have stable radio communications with the infantry corps...

Request instructions as to further action.

Zhukov: O n e. Your right-hand neighbour is fighting in the area of Pruzhany-Gorodets.

The advance of an enemy force from Brest towards Kovel is the result of inadequately organized action by Korobkov.

You will turn your flank towards Brest-Litovsk and seal off the approaches to Kovel.

T w o. Muzychenko is fighting successfully north of Kamenka-Strumilovskaya and Rava-Russkaya, and further along the state border. Having sent in a formidable panzer group, the enemy has slashed the junction between 5th and 6th armies and is out to capture Brody.

T h r e e. Karpezo and Ryabyshev are dealing counterblows in the following directions: Karpezo through Brody to the north-west, with the fighting now apparently going on about 15 kilometres north-west of Brody; Ryabyshev is to the left and pointing northward. This manoeuvre will assist you.

The objective of the counterblow is to smash the enemy in the area of Brody-Krystynopol and further north, thereby allowing you to assemble units and organize a stable front... To the north and south of Lutsk the 19th and 9th Mechanized corps and two infantry corps will be brought into action to reinforce your group.

Measures will be taken with regard to aviation...

Nothing has been received from you by radio or decode(

We'll dispatch an expert by plane to determine the reason fo the technical differences in radio transmission and coding

I repeat: seal off all approaches to Kovel from the north don't send your infantry divisions into counterattacks withou tanks, for this will be of no avail. It is essential to help the 87th Rifle Division with shells and other ammunition. See if you can possibly get it out of the encirclement at night.

How are your KV and other tanks doing? Do they pierce German armour and approximately how many panzers has the enemy lost on your front?

Potapov: I have under my command the 14th Air Division which had 41 planes as of this morning. The order issued by the Front says we are covered by the 62nd and 18th Bomber divisions. I have no information about their whereabouts and no contact with them.

I have 30 large KV tanks. But there are no shells for their 152-mm guns.

I have T-26 and BT tanks, mainly of old models, including some with twin turrets.

We have destroyed up to 100 enemy panzers.

Your order is clear. I have one fear: will I be in time to bend Fedyuninsky's right flank and securely seal off approaches from the north? After all, enemy panzers have by now reached the Ratno area. In any case, I will do my best to carry out your order.

Zhukov: The KV's 152-mm gun takes 09-30 ammunition; so order immediate issue of 09-30 concrete-piercing shells and use them. You'll give the panzers a hell of a pasting. As regards everything else, we'll organize assistance. I am relying on you and Nikishev very much. I'll come and see you tonight or tomorrow. Goodbye.

To continue the offensive towards Kiev, the German Command had to transfer a sizeable force and hundreds of panzers from the strategic reserves to replenish von Kleist's units.

If the units of the South-Western Front had succeeded in organizing better land and air reconnaissance, as well as closer liaison and troop control, the result of the counterblow would have been even more effective.

In these battles a great deal of credit must go to the 22nd Mechanized Corps under Major-General S. M. Kondrusev, the 27th Rifle Corps of the 5th Army under Major-General P. D. Artemenko, and the 8th Mechanized Corps under D. I. Ryabyshev.

The operations of the 8th Mechanized Corps could have yielded still better results had the Corps Commander not divided the Corps into two groups and handed over command of one group to Commissar N. K. Poppel who lacked adequate tactical training to control a large-scale engagement.

The 15th Mechanized Corps under General Karpezo fell short of its capacity, which was quite considerable for that time, in carrying out its task.

For some reason our historians seem to treat this truly great frontier battle in the initial period of the war against Nazi Germany in general outline only. It would be highly desirable to make a detailed analysis of the tactical expediency in this phase of a counterattack to use mechanized corps against the breakthrough of the main group of enemy troops, as well as the organi-

zation of the counterattack itself. After all, it was thanks to these actions of our troops that the enemy plan of a swift thrust to Kiev was thwarted at the outset. Having sustained heavy losses in this fighting, the enemy learned of the staunchness of the Soviet soldiers who were prepared to fight to the last drop of their blood.

Of considerable interest is the evaluation of this battle offered in the reminiscences of General Hoth, former commander of the German 3rd Panzer Group:

"The worst of the fighting fell to the lot of Army Group South. Enemy forces on the defensive against the formations of the northern wing were pushed back from the frontier but soon succeeded in getting over the surprise and checked the advance of the German forces by counterattacks of reserve and tank units from rearward areas. The tactical breakthrough of the 1st Panzer Group attached to the 6th Army was not achieved until June 28. A formidable obstacle hindering the advance of German forces were the powerful enemy counterblows."

From my phone talks during those days with General Vatutin in Moscow, I learned that on the Western and North-Western Fronts the commanding generals and their staffs still had no reliable communications with the commanders of armies. Our divisions and corps had to fight in isolation, without cooperation with the neighbouring troops and aviation, and without proper direction from the centre. It became clear to me from Vatutin's reports that an exceptionally difficult situation had developed on the Western and North-Western Fronts.

Vatutin told me that Stalin was perturbed and tending to blame everything on the Command and Staff of the Western Front; he was accusing Marshal Kulik for inactivity. Marshal Shaposhnikov, who was at the Headquarters of the Western Front, reported that Kulik had been at the Headquarters of the 3rd Army in the morning of June 23, but communications with it had been cut off.

Some time later, however, the General Staff managed to learn from various sources that large-scale enemy groups of armoured and mechanized forces had broken through in several sectors of both Fronts and were swiftly moving into Byelorussia and the Baltic area...

Thus began the grim trials of the Soviet people.

In recent years, it is common to blame the Command for not having ordered our main forces to pull up from the interior to repulse the enemy. I do not venture to state what would have happened if this were done: whether the result would have been better or worse. It is quite possible that, being under-equipped with anti-tank and anti-aircraft facilities and being less mobile than the enemy, our troops may have failed to withstand the powerful slashing thrusts of the enemy panzer forces and may therefore, have found themselves in as grave a predicament as some of the armies of the frontier districts. How can one tell what may then have developed at the approaches to Moscow and Leningrad, and in the south of the country.

*It will only be fair to add that the Nazi Command had seriously counted on our rushing the main forces of the Fronts closer to the frontier, where it planned to encircle and destroy them. That, indeed, was the main objective of Plan Barbarossa at the start of the war.*

Early in the morning on June 26 General Vatutin called me at the command post in Ternopol.

In the Baltic area and Byelorussia, he informed me, the situation was extremely unfavourable. The 8th Army of the North-Western Front was withdrawing towards Riga, the 11th Army was fighting its way towards Polotsk; the 21st Mechanized Corps was being rushed from the Moscow Military District to reinforce the Front. Stalin had ordered the activation of a Reserve Front, which was to be deployed on the Sushchevo-Nevel-Vitebsk-Mogilev-Zhlobin-Gomel-Chernigov-the Desna-Dnieper line. It would incorporate the 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd armies.

Basically, this was the line People's Commissar Timoshenko and I and a group of General Staff officers had reconnoitred in May, planning to hold staff exercises there to verify our projects for troop control on an operational scale.

In those days neither the Front commands, nor the High Command, nor the General Staff had complete enough information about the enemy forces deployed against our Fronts. The General Staff was receiving plainly exaggerated intelligence from the Fronts about the enemy's panzer, air and motorized units. Today, when we have all but exhaustive information about

the strength of both sides, we can fill in the picture and take stock of the Soviet forces in the frontier military districts and then of the deployment of the German forces which invaded our country.

No few articles and books have been written on this subject already, but in several cases they are tendentious and lack the necessary expertise.

They inform us that on the eve of the war 170 Soviet divisions were dispersed over a vast territory with a frontage of nearly 4,500 kilometres from the Barents to the Black Sea, with the depth of troop dispositions spanning 400 kilometres, without the density on the crucial sectors essential to repulse the enemy.

That was not exactly the case. The distance between the Barents Sea and the Black Sea does total 4,500 km, but only if the entire shoreline covered by the coast defences and the Navy is added to the land border covered by the five military frontier districts.

As it happened, there were no troops at all along the Gulf of Finland shore from Tallinn to Leningrad. The 170 Soviet divisions, therefore, really manned 3,375 km. Along the land border, the troop density of the various groupings differed, depending on local conditions and the strategic importance of each sector.

The Northern Front (Leningrad Military District) stretching over 1,275 kilometres was covered by just 21 divisions and one infantry brigade. Thus, each division had an average frontage of 61 km.

Deployed along the 2,100 km frontage of the Special Baltic, Special Western, Special Kiev and Odessa districts were 149 divisions and one brigade. In this crucial sector the average per division was just a little over 14 kilometres. Those are the facts. On the eve of the war these forces were stationed as follows:

The Special Baltic Military District (Commanding Officer, Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov; Military Council Member, Corps Commissar P. A. Dibrova; Chief of Staff, Major-General P. S. Klenov) had 25 divisions, including four tank and two mechanized and one infantry brigade.

The Special Western Military District (Commanding Officer, General of the Army D. G. Pavlov; Military Council Member,

Corps Commissar A. F. Fominykh; Chief of Staff, Major-General V. E. Klimovskikh) had 24 infantry, 12 tank, 6 mechanized, and 2 cavalry divisions.

The Special Kiev Military District (Commanding Officer, Colonel-General M. P. Kirponos; Military Council Member, Division Commissar Y. P. Rykov; Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General A. M. Purkayev) had 32 infantry, 16 tank, 8 mechanized and 2 cavalry divisions.

The Odessa Military District (Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-General Y. T. Cherevichenko; Military Council Member, Corps Commissar A. F. Kolobyakov; Chief of Staff, Major-General M. V. Zakharov) had 13 infantry, 4 tank, 2 mechanized, and 3 cavalry divisions.

The strongest grouping of our forces was thus deployed in the South-Western Sector (Kiev and Odessa Military Districts). It was manned by 45 infantry, 20 tank, 10 mechanized and 5 cavalry divisions.

Out of the 149 divisions and one brigade in the four western border districts, 48 divisions were attached to the first covering echelon and were deployed 10 to 50 km from the state frontier (the infantry divisions closer, the tank divisions further inland). The main forces of the frontier districts were positioned at a distance of 80 to 300 km inland from the state frontier. The flanks of the coastal military districts were covered by the Navy and the coastal defences, which consisted mainly of artillery.

Directly along the actual frontier were the frontier-guard units of the NKVD.

I have already cited some of the reasons for our reverses at the beginning of the war. References to other reasons will still arise, but I want to say loud and clear at this point that the errors made by the leadership do not lift the blame for blunders and misjudgements from the military command of all levels.

No military leader who has erred can have any moral right to shirk his responsibility or shift the blame to his superiors. The troops and their commanders should, as the regulations prescribe, be prepared to carry out their combat mission in any situation. Yet on the eve of the war, and even after dark on June 21, some ranking commanders of formations making up the frontier covering echelon waited for instructions from their superiors up to the last moment, and did not hold their units in

combat readiness, although the sound of engines and the clanging of caterpillar tracks could already be heard on the other side of the border.

The German High Command committed 153 divisions of wartime strength against the Soviet troops, including 29 against the Baltic, 50 (including 15 panzer) divisions against the Western, and 33 (including 9 panzer and motorized) divisions against the Kiev District, and 12 against the Odessa District. Up to 5 divisions were in Finland, and 24 divisions were in reserve and advanced in the main strategic directions.

These facts came to our knowledge in the initial phase of the war, mainly through prisoners of war and captured documents. Shortly before the war, Stalin, the People's Commissar for Defence and the General Staff had believed that the Nazi Command would keep not less than 50 per cent of its troops and of its air force in the West and the occupied countries.

In actual fact, at the time it started the war against the Soviet Union the Nazi Command left less than one-third of its divisions in those areas — and second-rate ones at that — and soon reduced even that figure.

In its Army Groups North, Centre, and South, the enemy sent into action 4,300 tanks and assault guns. The land forces were supported by 4,980 combat aircraft. The invasion force had an almost two-fold edge over our artillery, with the enemy's artillery being mostly motorized.

Looking back to those first days of the war, I have endeavoured to pinpoint and analyze the tactical and strategic mistakes committed by the military — the People's Commissar for Defence, the General Staff, and the district commands — on the eve and immediately after the start of the war.

We did not foresee the large-scale surprise offensive launched at once by all available forces which had been deployed in advance in all major strategic directions. We did not envisage the nature of the strike in its entirety. Neither the People's Commissar nor I and my predecessors B. M. Shaposhnikov and K. A. Meretskov, nor the top officers of the General Staff, had expected the enemy to concentrate such huge numbers of armour and motorized troops, and commit them on the first day to action in powerful compact groupings in all strategic directions with the aim of striking powerful wedging blows.

Another thing. Just before the war, the 10th Army and some other units of the Western District were positioned in the Belostok bulge, which was bent outward towards the enemy. The 10th Army was in a particularly unfavourable position. This tactical configuration exposed its defenders to deep envelopment and encirclement from the directions of Grodno and Brest by means of a blow at its flanks. In the meantime, the deployment of our troops in the Grodno-Suwalki and Brest directions was not deep and powerful enough to prevent a breakthrough and the envelopment of the Belostok group.

This error made in 1940 was not remedied by the start of the hostilities. When the main forces of the enemy crushed the flanks of the covering troops and broke through at Grodno and Brest, the 10th Army and the adjacent flanks of the 3rd and 4th should have been swiftly withdrawn to escape encirclement, and transferred to rear lines of defence in vulnerable sectors where they could have greatly reinforced our resistance. This was not done, however.

A similar mistake was repeated with the armies of the South-Western Front which, too, were being belatedly withdrawn to escape the threat of encirclement.

All this showed that at that time none of us yet had sufficient experience in troop control in the complex conditions of fierce large-scale fighting on a vast stretch of land.

Mention should also be made of yet another mistake made by the High Command and the General Staff which I have already partially referred to. This was the counter-offensive envisioned in Directive No. 3.

When the High Command ordered that counter-offensive, it did not know the situation that had shaped by the close of June 22. Neither did the various Front commands know the true state of affairs. The High Command based its decision not on an analysis of the obtaining situation and not on verified estimates, but on intuition and a desire to act. It failed to take the capability of the troops into account, and that is totally impermissible at crucial moments in an armed struggle.

The only correct mode of action in the obtaining situation was to strike back with mechanized corps against the thrusting panzer groups. Most of the counterattacks that were in fact at-

tempted were poorly organized, and, lacking due cooperation and support, failed to achieve their objective.

There was another factor that affected our fighting capacity during the first days. Some army commanders, instead of organizing steady control from their command posts and maintaining contact with their neighbours, with Front Headquarters and with the air force, rushed from unit to unit giving instructions without a knowledge of the situation in other sectors. Thereby, the commanding officers of units and formations were placed in a tight spot. Lacking stable communications with their superior commands they were forced to act at their own discretion, in any way they thought fit — quite frequently to the detriment of adjacent units.

The disorderly withdrawal of the 3rd Army from the Grodno area and the 4th Army from the Brest area drastically worsened the situation for the 10th Army commanded by Major-General K. D. Golubev. Without overly strong enemy pressure, the 10th Army, entrenched in the Osovets fortified area, was still fighting.

Lieutenant-General I. V. Boldin, Deputy Commander of the Western Front, went to that area and took charge of the mounted and mechanized group of the 6th and 11th Mechanized corps and of elements of the 6th Cavalry Corps. On June 23 a counterattack was mounted from the Suwalki bulge at the flank of the enemy. It failed, because Boldin was not able to concentrate all his forces for action, owing to the dispersal of the various formations and the unsatisfactory state of communications.

On that day, in fact, only the 11th Mechanized Corps, under Major-Ceneral D. K. Mostovenko, had operated effectively. The 6th Mechanized Corps, commanded by Major-General M. G. Khatskilevich, on the defensive as part of the 10th Army along the Narev river, was unable to concentrate in good time for the counterattack. Valuable time was lost in disengaging and reassembling it. Units of the 6th Cavalry Corps, commanded by Major-General N. S. Nikitin, were held up on the march, being continuously harassed by enemy air strikes, and suffering heavy losses.

Throughout June 24 there was bitter fighting in the Grodno area. Despite air superiority, the enemy found himself in a critical situation. The command of Army Group Centre was

compelled to rush in another two army corps and to turn several units of the 3rd Panzer Group.

Bloody battles continued throughout the 25th, too, but due to inadequate material and technical supplies the counterattacking group was unable to wage effective offensive action. In the course of the fighting it sustained considerable losses and began to withdraw. Owing to fuel shortages, the tankmen were unable to remove all of their vehicles from the battlefield.

Corps Commander M. G. Khatskilevich was killed in this battle. He had been a good officer and a brave man. We were close friends for many years, ever since serving together in the Cavalry Inspectorate in the early 1930s. General N. S. Nikitin, who wholly merited his reputation of an intelligent, strong-willed and gallant cavalry corps commander, also fell in that battle.

The spearhead of the strongest group of German land and air forces in our western strategic direction was aimed at Moscow. Operating against our Western Front was Army Group Centre, which consisted of two field armies (4th and 9th) and two panzer groups (2nd and 3rd). It was supported by the 2nd Air Fleet which incorporated an entire corps of dive bombers, and was well provided with High Command artillery, motorized, engineer and construction units, and formidable auxiliary materiel.

On all the sectors of their major strikes, the German forces had built up a five- or six-fold superiority. Operations by the main forces were continuously supported by air strikes.

A grave situation developed in the Brest area. Yet the enemy was unable to crush the resistance of the garrison of the Brest Fortress, where the beleaguered troops put up a heroic resistance. For the Germans the defence of Brest came as a complete surprise: the panzer forces of Guderian's group and the 4th German Field Army were compelled to bypass the city and the fortress.

The troops of our 4th Army commanded by Major-General A. A. Korobkov sustained a blow of no smaller force than befell the 3rd Army under Lieutenant-General V. I. Kuznetsov in the Grodno area. But being in possession of heroic Brest and controlling the 22nd Tank Division and the 6th, 42nd, 49th and 75th Rifle divisions, the command of the 4th Army ought to have conducted its defensive operations in a more organized way.

Unfortunately this was not the case, even though the Army com mand was allocated the 14th Mechanized Corps.

What was going on at that time on the distant approaches to Minsk?

Uninformed of the true state of affairs in the 3rd, 10th and 4th armies, and not being fully aware of the enemy panzer breakthrough, Front Commander General of the Army D. G. Pavlov took several decisions which were not in keeping with the situation.

The troops of the 3rd, 10th and 4th armies had suffered great losses in the border fighting, and were pulling back eastward while courageously holding the eager enemy at bay. Four divisions of the 13th Army were also heroically fighting delaying battles: on June 26 and 27 they fought in the Minsk fortified area.

On the High Command's directive General of the Army Pavlov ordered the 3rd and 10th armies to withdraw eastward and occupy a defence line running from Lida to Slonim and farther on to Pinsk. But the order could not be carried out because both armies were semi-encircled, fatigued, and were making arduous headway under the continuous battering of German planes and panzers.

On June 26 the German 39th Motorized Corps approached the Minsk fortified area. Here it was met by units of the Soviet 44th Rifle Corps under General V. A. Yushkevich, which were moving towards the same area.

To strengthen the defences of Minsk in the direction of Molodechno, the 2nd Rifle Corps under Major-General A. N. Yermakov was urgently moved to the city's north-western approaches. It incorporated the 100th and 161st divisions.

However, when the 47th Motorized Corps of Guderian's panzer group came to the south-western approaches of Minsk, the situation of the city's defenders deteriorated sharply.

The enemy was bombing Minsk savagely. The city was enveloped in flames. Thousands of its peaceful inhabitants hurled curses at the Nazi flyers as they died...

Stubborn fighting was underway at the near approaches to Minsk. Special credit must go to units of the 64th, 100th and 161st Rifle divisions. They destroyed over a hundred enemy panzers and killed thousands of Nazis.

Defend Leningrad

Beleaguered Leningrad People come to the river for water

A A Zhdanov, Member of the Leningrad Front's Military Counc

Breaking the blockade in the Lake Ladoga area. Men of the Volkhov and Leningrad Fronts join up, January 1943

On June 26 Stalin phoned me at the command post of the South-Western Front in Ternopol, and said:

"A bad situation has developed on the Western Front. The enemy has approached Minsk. Something incomprehensible is happening to Pavlov. Nobody knows Marshal Kulik's whereabouts. Marshal Shaposhnikov is ill. Can you fly to Moscow at once?"

"I'll discuss further action with Comrades Kirponos and Purkayev right away," I said, "and then go to the aerodrome."

Late in the evening of June 26 I landed in Moscow and went to Stalin's office directly from the airport. In Stalin's office I saw Commissar for Defence Timoshenko and Lieutenant-General Vatutin, my First Deputy, standing stiffly at attention. Both of them were pale and drawn, their eyes red from lack of sleep. Stalin was not at his best either.

With a brief nod, he said:

"Put your heads together and tell me what can be done in the existing situation." He flung a map of the Western Front on the table.

I told him we would need about 40 minutes to get our bearings.

"Very well. Report to me in 40 minutes," Stalin rejoined.

We went to an adjacent room and began discussing the situation and our capabilities on the Western Front.

The situation there was indeed exceedingly grave. The remnants of the 3rd and 10th armies were surrounded west of Minsk and fighting an unequal battle, tying down a sizeable enemy force. Some units of the 4th Army had withdrawn to the Pripyat forests. Scattered formations, which had sustained serious losses in previous battles, were pulling back to the Berezina river from the Dokshitsy-Smolevichi-Slutsk-Pinsk line. These weakened troops of the Western Front were being pursued by powerful enemy groups.

Having discussed the situation, we could think of nothing better than to suggest urgently deploying the 13th, 19th, 20th, 21st and 22nd armies to defend the Western Dvina-Polotsk-Vitebsk-Orsha-Mogilev-Mozyr line. Furthermore, defences were to be organized immediately on a rearward line running through Selizharovo-Smolensk-Roslavl-Gomel by the 24th and 28th armies of the High Command Reserve. In addition, we

suggested that two or three more armies should be formed out of the divisions of the Moscow volunteer home guard.

All these proposals were approved by Stalin and instantly put into effect through appropriate instructions.

In our proposals we were proceeding from the prime task of building up a defence in depth at the approaches to Moscow, continuously harrying the enemy and checking his advance on one of the lines of defence, and then organizing a counter-offensive with troops brought in for this purpose from the Soviet Far East, and chiefly with newly-activated formations.

Where could the enemy be stopped, what should be the advantageous line for the counter-offensive, and what forces could be mustered we did not know. So far, all this was nothing but an idea.

On June 27 at 10:05 hours I telegraphed the High Command order to General V. B. Klimovskikh, Chief of Staff of the Western Front. It read as follows:

Zhukov. You will now receive an order of the High Command.

Your task is:

O n e. Urgently to locate all units, get in touch with commanders and explain the situation, the position of the enemy and of your own troops, detailing in particular all locations where forward enemy mechanized units have broken through. Indicate the whereabouts of our surviving depots of fuel, ammunition, food and fodder, so that the units should obtain all they need for battle from those depots.

Set the units either the objective of engaging the enemy or of concentrating in forest areas; in the latter case, indicate routes and groupings.

T w o. To verify which units need to be supplied fuel and ammunition by air, so as not to abandon costly materiel, notably heavy tanks and heavy artillery.

T h r e e. To withdraw all remaining troops in three directions:

Through Dokshitsy and Polotsk, to be assembled behind the Lepel and Polotsk fortified areas;

the Minsk direction, the units to be assembled behind the Minsk fortified area;

third direction — Glussk forests and towards Bobruisk.

F o u r. Bear in mind that the enemy's first mechanized echelon has far outrun its infantry. This is now the weak point of the enemy, with both the forward echelon and the infantry advancing without tank support. If the commanders under you can muster their troops, particularly the tank units, a crushing blow can be delivered both to smash the first echelon and to rout the infantry moving without tanks. If possible, first mount a powerful blow at the rear of the enemy's first mechanized echelon advancing on Minsk and Bobruisk, after which you could most effectively turn against the infantry.

Such courageous action would reflect glory on the troops of the Western District. The success will be particularly great if you manage to mount a night attack on the mechanized units.

F i v e. Cavalry is to be withdrawn to the Pinsk forests and, drawing support from Pinsk and Luninets, bold and extensive attacks are to be mounted against the rear and the combat units of the enemy. Isolated small groups of cavalry commanded by loyal and gallant commanders should be deployed on all roads.

At 2 a. m. on June 28 I had another talk by a direct line with General Klimovskikh. Let me cite a few extracts:

**Zhukov:** Report what you know about the 3rd, 10th and 4th armies. In whose hands is Minsk and where is the enemy?

**Klimovskikh:** Minsk is still ours. An airborne landing has been reported in the Minsk-Smolevichi area. The 44th Rifle Corps is taking steps to wipe out the landing force in the Minsk area.

The enemy air force has been bombing the Borisov-Orsha railway nearly all day. There has been damage to stations and to track. We have been unable to establish radio contact with the 3rd Army.

According to latest reports, the enemy has approached the fortified area.

Baranovichi, Bobruisk, and Pukhovichi were in our hands as of last night.

**Zhukov:** Where are Kulik, Boldin and Korobkov? Where are the mechanized corps and the cavalry corps?

**Klimovskikh:** There have been no tidings from Kulik or Boldin. We are in touch with Korobkov, he is at his command

post east of Bobruisk. Khatskilevich's troops were moving up to Baranovichi, and Akhlyustin's troops to Stolbtsy.

Zhukov: When were Khatskilevich's and Akhlyustin's troops moving up?

Klimovskikh: They began assembling in those areas towards nightfall on the 26th. Deputy Corps Commander Svetlitsyn drove to their positions at about 19.00 yesterday. Tomorrow we are dispatching paratroopers to deliver orders to Kuznetsov and Golubev.

Zhukov: Are you aware that the 21st Rifle Corps has come to the Molodechno and Vileika area in good condition?

Klimovskikh: We had information that the 21st Rifle Corps was planning a withdrawal towards Molodechno, but the report was not confirmed.

Zhukov: Where is the heavy artillery?

Klimovskikh: Most of the heavy artillery is in our hands. We have no information about the 375th and 120th howitzer regiments.

Zhukov: Where are the mounted units and the 13th, 14th and 17th Mechanized corps?

Klimovskikh: The 13th Mechanized Corps is at Stolbtsy. The 14th Mechanized Corps has only a few tanks left and has joined the 17th at Baranovichi. I have no information on the whereabouts of the mounted units.

Korobkov has brought out the remnants of the 42nd, 6th and 75th. There are grounds to believe that the 49th Rifle Division is in the Byelovezhskaya Forest. A special paratrooper is being sent out at dawn to verify this and bring it out. We are expecting Kuznetsov to come out along both banks of the Niemen.

Zhukov: What news have you about the fighting with an enemy mechanized corps outside the Minsk fortified area, and where is the enemy force that was at Slutsk and in front of the Minsk fortified area yesterday?

Klimovskikh: In the Minsk fortified area the enemy mechanized corps was engaged by the 64th Rifle Division. From Slutsk enemy troops were pressing towards Bobruisk, but by nightfall Bobruisk was not yet occupied.

Zhukov: What do you mean by "not yet occupied"?

Klimovskikh: We had expected the enemy to try and break

through to Bobruisk in hot pursuit of our troops. This did not happen.

Zhukov: Take care that the enemy does not envelop your Minsk fortified area from the north. Seal off the Logoisk, Zembin, Pleshchenitsy directions: otherwise the enemy will bypass the fortified area and reach Borisov before you. That is all. Goodbye.

In spite of the heroism displayed *en masse* by the officers and men, and in spite of the courage and staying power of the commanding officers, the situation in all sectors of the Western Front continued to deteriorate. After nightfall on June 28, our troops withdrew from Minsk.

Breaking into the town, the enemy began a savage massacre of its inhabitants, burning and destroying cultural values and historical monuments.

The High Command and General Staff were deeply chagrined by the loss of the capital of Byelorussia. We were all acutely mindful of the sad fate that befell those inhabitants of Minsk who had not managed to leave the city.

On June 29 Stalin twice came to the Commissariat for Defence and the General Headquarters of the High Command, and on both occasions reacted violently to the situation that had developed in the western strategic direction.

At 6:45 hours on June 30, I conferred by telegraph on Timoshenko's orders with the Front Commander, General of the Army Pavlov, and realized that the commander himself was not sufficiently familiar with the situation.

Here are extracts from our conversation.

Zhukov. We can take no decision on the Western Front without knowing what is going on in the Minsk, Bobruisk and Slutsk areas.

Please report on the substance of the issue.

Pavlov. In the Minsk area, the 44th Rifle Corps is pulling back south of the Mogilev highway; the line where it is to make a stand is Stakhov-Cherven.

In the Slutsk area, according to air observers, the 210th Motorized Rifle Division was yesterday fighting at Shishetsy.

In the Bobruisk area, the enemy built a bridge at 04:00 hours today with 12 panzers crossing the river.

**Zhukov.** The Germans have announced over the radio that they have surrounded two armies east of Belostok. There is evidently some measure of truth in this. Why has your Headquarters failed to send out liaison men to locate the troops? Where are Kulik, Boldin, and Kuznetsov? Where is the cavalry corps? Surely, air observers have sighted the cavalry.

**Pavlov.** Yes, a large measure of truth. We know that on June 25 and 26 some units were on the Shchara river, fighting for the river crossings against enemy troops occupying the eastern bank of the Shchara. The 3rd Army was trying to pull back along both banks of the Shchara. The 21st Rifle Corps is in the Lida area. We had radio contact with the Corps until yesterday, then it broke off. The Corps is breaking out of the encirclement in the prescribed direction. Air observers cannot locate the cavalry and the mechanized units because they are carefully concealed in the forests from enemy aircraft. A special group with a radio transmitter has been sent out to locate Kulik and our units. So far the group has sent no word. Boldin and Kuznetsov, like Golubev, were with their troops as on June 26.

**Zhukov.** Your main mission is to locate the units as quickly as possible and withdraw them behind the Berezina river. Supervise personally and pick capable commanders for the task. The High Command wants you to assemble all troops of the Front promptly, and to ready them for action.

In no event should an enemy breakthrough be permitted in the Bobruisk and Borisov areas. You must at all cost prevent anything from getting in the way of the assembly of the armies in the Orsha-Mogilev-Zhlobin-Rogachev area. To ensure troop control in battle and to obtain information on what is happening at Bobruisk, send out a group of commanders with a radio transmitter under the command of your deputy. Immediately evacuate all depots so that nothing should fall into enemy hands. As soon as the situation is clearer present a full report.

**Pavlov.** We will commit all units, even the school, to hold Bobruisk and Borisov.

But the situation did not improve. On June 30 Stalin called me at the General Staff and ordered me to summon General of the Army Pavlov, Commander of the Western Front, to Moscow.

General Pavlov arrived the following day. I could hardly recognize him — he had changed so much in the eight days of the war. That same day he was removed from his command and soon after put on trial. At the proposal of the Military Council of the Western Front, Chief of Staff General Klimovskikh, Chief of Communications General Grigoryev, Chief of Artillery General Klich and other generals of the Front Headquarters were brought to trial as well.

People's Commissar for Defence Timoshenko was appointed Commander of the Western Front, with Lieutenant-General A. I. Yeremenko as his deputy. To reinforce the Western Front, the armies of the Reserve Front were given over to it.

On the North-Western Front, the situation continued to deteriorate sharply.

The 8th and 11th armies, which had escaped encirclement, were now retreating in diverging directions with great losses due to poor organization by the Front Command.

To cover the Pskov-Leningrad direction, the High Command ordered General Lelyushenko, commander of the 21st Mechanized Corps, to move up from the Opochka-Idritsa area towards Daugavpils to prevent the enemy from forcing the Western Dvina.

This objective, however, was clearly belated, for the enemy had already forced the Western Dvina on June 26, and captured Daugavpils. Nonetheless, the 21st Mechanized Corps undertook a bold counter-offensive, hitting the German 56th Motorized Corps and checking its advance.

Recalling this battle, Field Marshal von Manstein, who was then in command of the 56th Corps, wrote in his book *Lost Victories*:

"Soon we were forced to defend ourselves on the northern bank of the Dvina against enemy attacks supported by one tank division. On some sectors things were becoming critical."

However, under the pressure of superior forces and air strikes, the 21st Mechanized Corps was compelled to withdraw and go on the defensive, holding its positions and beating off

enemy attacks until July 2. Later, the 21st was incorporated in the 27th Army commanded by Major-General N. E. Berzarin who at the end of the war headed the heroic 5th Army of the First Byelorussian Front which lunged into Berlin, and who became the city's first Commandant.

It also gives me pleasure to commend the brilliant actions and fighting gallantry of the 46th Tank Division under Colonel V. A. Koptsov, a hero of Khalkhin Gol, which was a component of the 21st Mechanized Corps.

At the end of the month, Stalin made new changes in the military leadership. On June 30 Lieutenant-General Vatutin was appointed Chief of Staff of the North-Western Front.

On July 2, under the pressure of enemy forces the 27th Army started a withdrawal. All this time it had been fighting on a broad frontage and had neither the strength nor the means to organize a deeply echeloned defence.

Due to the belated approach of our reserves to the Velikaya river the enemy captured Pskov on the march. The 8th Army of the North-Western Front had lost contact with other troops and was withdrawing northward.

In the first eighteen days of the war, the North-Western Front had lost Lithuania, Latvia and a slice of the Russian Federation, creating the threat of the enemy taking Luga and emerging right close to Leningrad, the approaches to which were still inadequately fortified and poorly protected.

In all this time, the General Staff had received no clear and exhaustive dispatches from the staff of the North-Western Front as to the position of its troops, the deployment of the enemy or the location of its panzer and motorized forces. At times, we had to judge the developments by conjecture — a method which is no guarantee against mistakes.

The battles that were fought on the Western Front in early July, on the Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev and Bobruisk sectors, were marked by an overwhelming superiority of enemy motorized, panzer, and air forces. Fatigued in the continuous fighting, our troops were pulling back eastward, but even in these circumstances did their utmost to inflict the maximum casualties on the enemy and hold up his progress for as long as possible.

On the Berezina our troops were putting up an especially

stout resistance in the area of Borisov. Here the battle was fought by the Borisov Tank School commanded by Corps Commissar I. Z. Susaikov. By that time, the 1st Moscow Motorized Rifle Division under Major-General Y. G. Kreiser had moved into the area. The division was at wartime strength, was well trained and had some T-34 tanks. General Kreiser, who placed the Borisov Tank School under his command, succeeded in holding up the enemy's reinforced 18th Panzer Division for more than two days and nights. At the time this was of great importance. In this fighting General Kreiser proved himself a magnificent commander.

From Romanian territory German and Romanian troops went into action against the Southern Front, aiming their main strike in the direction of Mogilev-Podolsky and Zhmerinka, and threatening to hit the flank and rear of the 12th, 26th and 6th armies of the South-Western Front.

In the first six days of intensive fighting, the enemy broke through the defences of the Southern Front and advanced some 60 km. The position of the South-Western Front deteriorated considerably, since at this time, after several vain attempts, the Germans finally crushed the force defending the area of Rovno, Dubno, and Kremenets, and swept into the gap.

On July 4 the German troops approached the Novograd-Volynsky fortified area, where their attacks were beaten off and they sustained heavy losses. The enemy's motorized and panzer units were held up for nearly three days. Failing to achieve success, the enemy regrouped his forces south of Novograd-Volynsky; he captured Berdichev on July 7 and Zhitomir on July 9.

The fall of Berdichev and Zhitomir, and the continuing advance of the Romanian and German troops towards Mogilev-Podolsky created a threat of encirclement for the 12th, 26th and 6th armies of the South-Western Front. Fighting off the advancing enemy, these armies were slowly falling back due east.

To eliminate the threat of encirclement, the Command of the South-Western Front mounted a counterattack at Berdichev on July 9. Involved in the operation were the 15th, 4th and 16th Mechanized corps. From the north, in the Zhitomir area, the 5th Army was continuing its own counterattacks.

At the same time, the South-Western Front struck a powerful counterblow at the flank of the enemy's 1st Panzer Group from the Korosten fortified area.

The fighting in the Berdichev-Zhitomir area, which began on July 9, continued until July 16. Sustaining heavy losses and fearing a blow at the flank of its main group from the north, the command of Nazi Army Group South called off its offensive in the Zhitomir area.

This enabled the Command of the South-Western Front at last to withdraw the bulk of the 6th and 12th armies, which thus escaped encirclement, and to considerably reinforce the defences of Kiev.

Again the German forces were prevented from encircling troops of the South-Western Front. The Germans were compelled to wage bloody frontal battles without a stop. The panzers and the motorized formations of von Kleist's group were unsuccessful in their attempt to break through and gain space for operational manoeuvre.

On the Northern Front, where offensive action had started on June 29, the fighting was of a local nature and had no particular influence on the overall strategic situation.

In the early phase of the war our naval forces, too, had no major engagements with the German Navy and were mainly busy driving off air attacks. True, the Baltic Fleet was in a tight spot. Things had become very tough for the chief naval base in Tallinn, where all the main warships and supplies of the Baltic Fleet were concentrated.

The Tallinn base, like the city of Tallinn, was poorly protected on land due to the ill-advised actions of the 8th Army of the North-Western Front. All units of the Baltic Fleet, together with armed workers' detachments, were thrown into action to defend the capital of Estonia. Lines of defence and fortifications were hastily put up at the approaches to Tallinn. Key objectives inside the city were being prepared for defence.

Enemy attempts to capture the city and the naval base on the march were thwarted by the heroic actions of the 10th Rifle Corps of the 8th Army, units of marines, the fleet artillery and detachments of the Tallinn volunteer home guard. The battle for Tallinn and the Baltic Fleet's principal base continued the remainder of July and nearly all August. In late

August, due to the exhaustion of our forces and the reinforcement of enemy troops, the High Command decided to move the warships of the Baltic Fleet from the naval base to Kronstadt and the Leningrad harbour, and to abandon Tallinn.

The Fleet's combat aviation took a direct part in the fighting for Tallinn, striking hard at the attacking enemy formations. Tribute is due to the Baltic seamen: on the shore and aboard their ships they fought as real heroes.

At this time the Northern Fleet acted in cooperation with the troops of the Northern Front and initiated submarine operations against German shipping taking nickel ore out of Petsamo. The Black Sea Fleet was mainly engaged in transporting manpower and ammunition to the coastal armies and was active against enemy lines of communication, obstructing shipments to Romanian and Bulgarian ports.

A group of ships of the Black Sea Fleet, acting in conjunction with the air force, struck at the Romanian naval base at Constanța. The Black Sea Fleet's air arm systematically bombed Romanian oil fields and railroad junctions.

I am deliberately omitting detailed descriptions of specific naval actions because I believe that the admirals and captains of the Fleet will do this more proficiently than I. I must say, however, that cooperation between the coastal war fronts and the navy could have yielded much better results if the problems of coastal defence and the defence of naval bases had been resolved more farsightedly in the prewar years. Unfortunately, these issues were tackled by the naval command, the People's Commissar for Defence and the General Staff far too late.

Almost three weeks had passed since Nazi Germany spurned the non-aggression pact and invaded our country. During this period the German troops lost about 100,000 men, over 1,000 aircraft, and nearly half the panzers that they had committed in the sneak attack.

The Soviet Armed Forces, and notably troops of the Western Front, suffered heavy losses. This naturally affected the subsequent train of events quite adversely. The relation of strength and weapons on the Soviet-German front tilted still more heavily in the enemy's favour. The Nazis thrust

500 to 600 kilometres into the country's interior, capturing economically important regions and strategic objectives.

All this came as a great surprise for the Soviet people and for our troops. But in those grim days the Soviet people forcefully displayed their moral and political unity. From the very first moment the Party developed and daily increased its tremendous organizational and political activity, centring it on a single goal — rousing all forces to fight the enemy.

The mobilization plans, which had been worked out earlier, especially those concerning the production of ammunition, were put into effect on June 3. The People's Commissariats got instructions to increase the output of tanks, guns, planes and other tools of war. A week after the outbreak of war the Government cancelled the peacetime plan for the third quarter of 1941 and adopted a mobilization economic plan that envisaged an increase by over a quarter of the production of military equipment.

The developments showed, however, that this was not enough. A commission chaired by N. A. Voznesensky worked out a new, still more intensive military economic plan for the last three months of 1941. Relying on the production potential built up before the war, the Government adopted a plan for the rapid development of the Volga region, the Urals, Western Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia in 1942. And these regions played an outstanding role in putting the national economy on a wartime footing.

When converting the economy to provide for wartime needs, the Party acted on Lenin's advice, which said that a truly strong and properly organized rear is essential to fight a war: it must supply the front with trained reinforcements, armaments and food without interruption and in sufficient quantity.

Reconstruction was started in industry and transport. Material resources and manpower were redistributed. Agriculture was mobilized to serve the needs of the war. Thousands of plants which only recently produced civilian goods were now manufacturing ammunition and military equipment.

The engineering and tool-building works were being urgently converted to the production of tanks and planes. The steel plants were preparing to start mass production of armour-

sheet, shell-blanks and high-grade steel. Tank engines and generators, mine detectors, sound locators and radars were now also to be manufactured by radio and electrical engineering plants. The oil refineries were mostly to produce aviation gasoline and fuel for tanks and warships. Detonators for shells were to come off the production lines at watch factories. Damaged armoured trains were sent to railway repair shops.

The enemy had seized the most important economic regions and paralyzed mobilization in a number of former military districts. Millions of Soviet people and an enormous amount of property had remained behind in territory overrun by the enemy. The output of strategic materials, pig iron, steel, rolled stock and electric power declined sharply. New industrial centres were in danger of being captured. It was essential to take some extraordinary steps and move the remaining plants to the east, to merge them with the local ones, and then relying on that part of the country, stop the enemy and then drive him out.

Work unprecedented in scale and character was started throughout the country. On June 24 the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the USSR Council of People's Commissars adopted a resolution on setting up the Evacuation Council, with N. M. Shvernik as Chairman and A. N. Kosygin and M. G. Pervukhin as his deputies. Evacuation bureaus and committees were organized at all the People's Commissariats. Over 1,500 enterprises, mainly big military plants, were evacuated within the shortest possible time — between July and November 1941 — and soon resumed production at their new sites. At the same time, trains were taking troops and weapons to the west and south-west day and night, in an endless stream.

Now, after a lapse of several decades, it is even hard to conceive how much physical exertion and nervous tension, and, indeed, heroism this overturn in the country's life activity to suit the wartime needs and the goal of crushing the enemy had cost the Soviet people.

Devotees of the capitalist system could not take it into their heads how our Government managed to dismantle and relocate large economic complexes on so large a scale. Yet the key to this "Russian miracle", which our ideological opponents, cannot fathom to this day, is to be found in the

advantages of the socialist system based on people's socialized ownership of the means of production.

The build-up of the wartime economy in the country's east — the Urals, Siberia, the Volga country, and other eastern regions — followed two lines: all-out acceleration of the effort to complete enterprises whose construction was begun before the war, and the quickest possible re-assembly of evacuated enterprises.

A gigantic labour effort was set in motion under guidance of the Party at the largest enterprises of Sverdlovsk, Kurgan, Perm, Chelyabinsk, and other regions.

Giant plants were created from scratch in a matter of two or three months. Their construction was not yet finished when they began operating, sending their products — tanks, planes, guns, mortars, shells, and other war materiel — directly to the front. People worked so hard that, far from dropping off in the adverse wartime conditions, output kept rising and rising. Those were the telling results of the Party's educational drive in the years preceding the war, and especially of the creative effort of Party branches at industrial enterprises. Small wonder Goebbels complained in January 1943 that "by some miracle new masses of people and armaments kept coming and coming from the vast steppes of Russia, as though some great magician was fashioning Bolshevist people and armaments of Urals clay in any number."

A tremendous organizational effort was made, among others, by the Chelyabinsk Regional Committee of the Communist Party headed by its First Secretary, N. S. Patolichev. A man of indomitable energy and extraordinary organizational skill, Patolichev devoted much of his strength and imagination to converting the region's industrial enterprises to a wartime footing, and securing unfaltering interaction between them. His tireless dedication to the tasks set by the Party was commended by the Government on many occasions, and also mentioned by Stalin as an example for others to follow.

Good results were achieved at the Chelyabinsk Tractor Plant, which absorbed the evacuated section of Leningrad's famous Putilov Plant. Tank designers Zh. Y. Kotin and N. L. Dukhov managed to get the first lot of T-34 tanks off the production line a month after the relocation of the Len-

ıgrad plants. In due course, they designed and began pro-
ucing the JS heavy tank, which was much superior in all
espects to the German Tiger.

Attaching special importance to armoured troops, the State
)efence Committee ordered the Sormovo Shipyards in Gorky
o begin making tanks. I recall how the State Defence Com-
nittee delegated People's Commissar of the Tank Industry
V. A. Malyshev, who was also Deputy Chairman of the Council
)f People's Commissars, to go to Gorky and get production of
T-34 tanks started urgently at the shipyards. With the energetic
assistance of the Gorky Regional Party Committee and the
Party's City Committee, the people at the shipyards coped
with the assignment in a fantastically short time.

In October 1941, when I was entrusted the defence of
Moscow, we began receiving our first T-34 tanks from the
Sormovo Shipyards. They came just in time, and played a
conspicuous part in the Battle of Moscow. As time went on,
the shipyards stepped up the output of tanks, and improved
their quality.

In early November 1944, the shipyards modernized the
tank, supplying it with a cast turret and a new gun designed
by V. G. Grabin. On the heels of the Sormovo outfit, tanks
of this new type were also made at other plants.

Examples of this sort could be cited in great numbers.
I think that this heroic period in the life of the Soviet people
and the Party has not been properly examined so far, just
as the great economic effort made by Party and people dur-
ing the war. For at such critical times and in face of such mon-
umental events, the advantages of the socialist system, its
enormous potential, are seen most vividly.

The heroic feat of evacuating and restarting industrial
enterprises during the war, and the Party's colossal organi-
zational work it involved, meant as much for the country as
the greatest battles of World War II.

When the war broke out, the Party at once took a number
of practical measures to tighten centralized administration of
all fields of life and of the armed struggle against the enemy. The
Central Committee apparatus was reshaped and duties were
distributed among the Central Committee members to supervise
the vital sectors in military, economic and political affairs.

Our Party already had the experience of turning the country into a single military camp, as I already said in an earlier chapter of the book. This experience was put to good use from the very beginning of the war, with adjustments, of course, to suit all the new conditions. The Leninist principles of managing affairs at a time of mortal danger for the country were made the foundation of all the activity of the Communists at the front and in the rear. The people had full trust that the Party would find a way out of the grave situation and would organize the defeat of the Nazi forces. This took time.

The setbacks and the heavy losses sustained at the start of the war complicated the course of the struggle. The troops were pulling back inland, fighting all the way. The Central Committee of our Party, local Party organizations and the State Defence Committee saw to it that the people should know th reasons and circumstances that caused the temporary withdraw al.

Despite the complexity of the situation, the Party organizations and the local governments in the Uraine, Byelorussia and the Baltic republics were carrying on a successful drive to mobilize the people for active struggle against the enemy. To this end mass underground Party and Komsomol organizations were set up on the temporarily occupied territory, and the nucleus of partisan detachments was formed, joined thereupon by the men, commanders and political instructors of Red Army units which had broken out of encirclement.

As soon as the Nazis stepped on Soviet soil they learned to feel not only the hatred of the Soviet people, but also the telling losses inflicted upon them by those who had gone underground to continue the struggle.

In those days the Soviet Command had no choice but to assume the defensive along the entire strategic front. The country had neither the strength nor the means to mount large-scale offensive actions. It was necessary to activate large strategic reserves of troops and to arm them properly so as to wrest the initiative from the enemy through superiority in strength, then pass to an offensive and begin the eviction of enemy forces from the Soviet Union.

All this was done, but later.

Our forces went over to a strategic defence while making

their forced withdrawal. They had to act in disadvantageous tactical groups, and owing to the shortage of strength and materiel we could not have a deeply echeloned system of defence, particularly its backbone — anti-tank defence.

Our anti-aircraft artillery was not half as strong as one could wish, and the troops were not provided due cover in the air. In the early period of the war the enemy had next to uncontested command of the air, and this considerably undermined the staying power of our troops.

And yet, despite some mistakes and at times the insufficient resistance capacity of the troops, a strategic defence was organized and yielded good results.

We may recall that in the second and third stages of the war, when the Nazis experienced the bitter taste of defeat on the Soviet front, they failed to build a defence of this sort, which, along with other factors, led to their final defeat.

The paramount objectives of our strategic defence at that time were:

to hold up the Nazi troops on the lines of defence for as long as possible, so as to gain maximum time and bring up troops from interior regions, build up new reserves, and deploy them along the main sectors;

to inflict the maximum losses on the enemy, to harry and exhaust him and thereby restore as far as possible the balance of strength;

to carry out the Party and Government plan of evacuating the population and industrial enterprises to the country's interior and to win time for adjusting industry to the needs of the war;

to muster the maximum forces and mount a counter-offensive so as to frustrate Hitler's war plan, and, indeed, crush Nazi Germany and its satellites.

Our troops were not only stoutly resisting the enemy on the ground, in the air and on the sea, but more important still, were here and there able to deal substantial counterblows. Wherever possible, the heroic Soviet troops and partisans were inflicting enormous losses on the enemy.

On the fifth day of the war, the Central Committee ordered the mobilization of Communists and Komsomol members to the army. They would be not merely fighting men, but also "polit-

ical soldiers", and were to become the mainstay of Party organizations in the armed forces.

There were over 563,000 Communists in the Red Army and Navy on the eve of the war, and more than a third of the entire army personnel were Komsomol members. Some 1,100,000 Communists went to the front lines in the first six months of the war.

On many occasions I met and talked with newly arrived political soldiers. They showed a kind of special and unshakable confidence in our victory. "We'll make it!" they used to say. And I always felt that these were not mere words, but a way of thinking and a reflection of genuine Soviet patriotism. Their magnificent optimism instilled confidence in men who were beginning to lose their presence of mind.

On July 3, in his radio address on behalf of the Central Committee of the Party, Stalin explained the situation on the fronts and urged the Soviet people promptly to readjust their lives and the nation's economy to the needs of war against a powerful, treacherous and savage enemy. Stalin called upon the Party and the people to rise to the holy war against the enemy, to put an end to unconcern and sharply raise vigilance.

Stalin based this memorable speech on the directive of the Party's Central Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of June 29, 1941, sent to all Party and Government offices in all areas adjoining the front. Written in the form of an appeal the directive listed the major tasks of the Soviet people and their armed forces in the Great Patriotic War.

Stalin's speech and the directive of the Party and Government addressed to the people sounded as a powerful alarm, as though echoing Lenin's famous call, "The Socialist Land is in danger!" One could feel that the wrathful alarm would not subside until the fascist intruders were wiped out.

A call rallying all people and setting forth the meaning of the general effort is of enormous significance at a time of crisis and hardship in the life of any country, at a time when an internal or external enemy attacks. A Party which is entrusted with the destiny of a nation must know how immediately to rally all the strata and classes, and must clearly formulate the goal and name the enemy. Our Leninist Party has a perfect command of this art.

The Party's slogan, "All for the front, all for victory", brought all Soviet citizens face to face with the danger. The slogan rallied people of different views and habits, military and utterly civilian people, men and women of every age and origin.

In the name of their supreme patriotic mission, that of defending their country, the peoples of our entire multinational state rose as one man, multiplying the material force and power of arms many times over by their single-minded determination and stout faith.

By decision of the Party's Central Committee, political propaganda agencies in the army were restructured and the post of military commissar reintroduced in July. This was done in order to promote the political work and enhance the Party's influence in the armed forces.

From the first days of the war, the activity of all mass organizations was directed to serving the general war effort. On the Central Committee's recommendation, the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and the Komsomol's Central Committee worked out a number of practical measures to promote assistance to the front, tighten labour discipline in the rear, provide for more care for the wounded and the families of men fighting in the front lines, to train military reserves, and to enlist the working people in organizing local air defence.

Young men and women performed feats of patriotism at the front and in the rear, and displayed constant readiness to sacrifice themselves for the good of their country.

I talked with some Komsomol members just before they were sent behind enemy lines to carry out intelligence and sabotage missions. Unfortunately, I did not write down their names, but the encounters with them are still fresh in my memory.

One such episode I want to describe here.

In early July, when the enemy had occupied Minsk and enemy troops were streaming towards the Berezina river, an intelligence and saboteur group was to be sent behind the enemy lines in the Minsk area. It was made up of two girls and two boys, all of them members of the Komsomol who had a good command of the German language. If my memory serves me well, the girls had been students of the Institute of Foreign Languages. I learned from our conversation that they were Muscovites. When I asked whether they were scared of flying

behind enemy lines, they glanced at one another and, with a faint smile, replied:

"Of course, we are — a bit. Bad deal if we're captured during the landing. If we are not, then everything will be all right."

They were both very young and good-looking. Their country had called them and they agreed to perform a dangerous and difficult job.

The sizeable losses in manpower and materiel necessitated several organizational measures aimed at strengthening troop control and the combat efficiency of units and formations. Temporarily the corps system of command was abolished and the personnel and communications facilities thus released were utilized to buttress the army and divisional echelons of command. It was decided to have 6 divisions to an army instead of 9 to 12. The division replaced the corps as the biggest tactical formation. The number of aircraft in air regiments and divisions was halved. The activation of High Command reserves was launched on a large scale.

The State Defence Committee and the Central Committee of the Party instructed the High Command and the Red Army's Political Administration to tighten discipline among the troops. To this end, the Chief of the Political Administration and the People's Commissar for Defence issued a series of directives.

In July the situation on all sectors became still more complicated. Despite the engagement of a large number of formations brought up from interior military districts, we did not succeed in establishing a stable front of resistance. Though sustaining heavy losses, the enemy still had a three- or four-fold superiority on the decisive sectors, not to mention his superiority in tanks.

For a variety of reasons, the railway transports of troops were irregular. Newly arrived units were often sent into action before they were fully concentrated, which had an adverse effect on the morale of the troops and on their tenacity in combat.

Another weakness of ours was that due to the absence of highspeed cross-country vehicles the troops were unable to manoeuvre the artillery on a wide enough scale to provide support at the right time in repelling enemy tank attacks. The Fronts and armies had very few tank units and formations left.

These were the conditions in which a bitter battle unfolded for Smolensk.

The Smolensk sector of the front was defended from the north-west by the 22nd Army under Lieutenant-General F. A. Yershakov, and a little behind its left flank by the 19th Army under Lieutenant-General I. S. Konev. The sector from Vitebsk to Orsha was manned by the 20th Army under Lieutenant-General P. A. Kurochkin, and the 13th Army under Lieutenant-General F. N. Remezov was lined up due south along the left bank of the Dnieper up to the town of Rogachev.

The 16th Army under Lieutenant-General M. F. Lukin was deployed in the Smolensk area as the Western Front reserve, while the 21st Army under Lieutenant-General V. F. Gerasimenko and then Colonel-General F. I. Kuznetsov operated on the southern wing of the Front.

The enemy aimed to cut the Western Front in two by committing powerful shock forces against it, to encircle the main Soviet force at Smolensk, and thereby open the road to Moscow.

A furious battle ensued beside the walls of the ancient Russian city of Smolensk, which had once risen as a next to impregnable obstacle to Napoleon's armies heading for Moscow.

The 2nd and 3rd Panzer groups of Army Group Centre started the offensive against the Western Front in the first echelon. The 2nd Panzer Group struck its main blow from the area of Shklov, bypassing Smolensk in the south-west, and its 24th Motorized Corps from the area of Bykhov in the direction of Krichev and Yelnya. The 3rd Panzer Group, in cooperation with the 5th and 6th Army corps, was delivering a flanking strike north-west of Smolensk. The Nazis had considerably superior strength.

At the beginning of the battle the enemy managed to make deep breaches in the areas of Polotsk and Vitebsk, and to the north and south of Mogilev. The right wing of the Western Front retreated to Nevel.

Four infantry divisions, a panzer division, the Great Germany Regiment, and other German units, were advancing on Mogilev. The 13th Army formations that had been stoutly defending the city were encircled.

The 61st Corps under General F. A. Bakunin was manning the perimeter defences round the city. A brilliant showing in

the battle for Mogilev was made by the 172nd Rifle Division under Lieutenant-General M. T. Romanov. Some 45,000 Mogilev citizens were helping to build fortifications. The city's defenders repulsed enemy attacks for two weeks. In cooperation with the right-flank divisions of the 21st Army, counterattacking in the direction of Mogilev in the south, they pinned down part of the 46th and 24th Motorized corps of the 2nd Panzer Group and inflicted considerable losses.

While the enemy was advancing east of the Dnieper, units of the 21st Army (under General F. I. Kuznetsov) forced the river on July 13, liberated Rogachev and Zhlobin and set out for the north-west, fighting their way to Bobruisk. The 63rd Rifle Corps under General L. G. Petrovsky was making the main effort. A few days later Petrovsky died a heroic death. I had known him well. He was a talented and well-educated commander, and I believe that had he not been killed, he would have become an outstanding military leader. The counterblow dealt by the 21st Army contained eight German divisions. That was extremely important then.

The staunch defence put up by the 13th Army in the area of Mogilev and the offensive operations of the 21st Army at Bobruisk, halted the advance of the enemy considerably in the Roslavl direction. Army Group Centre had to transfer several divisions from other sectors to the 21st Army's zone of operations.

Stubborn fighting against a large enemy force thrusting for Smolensk, continued at the centre of the front. Units of the 20th Army continuously attacked the enemy and held the defences along a wide frontage. Still, they were unable to halt the lunge of the German 9th Army, which outflanked our army and thrust into the southern part of Smolensk.

On July 16, 1941 almost all Smolensk fell into German hands. The 16th and 20th armies were encircled in the northern part of the city. But they did not lay down their arms and fought on for another nearly ten [illegible] us delaying the German advance in the direction of [illegible]

The State Defe[illegible] mmittee an[illegible] Stalin took that defeat hard[illegible] eside hi[illegible], and we ranking officers [illegible] e full w[illegible] anwhile the battles in th[illegible] k con[illegible]; the[illegible]

even flared up with renewed force. The High Command immediately organized a new front of defence, deploying it in the rear of the Western Front.

On July 14, when the battles were still raging at the approaches to Smolensk, a new Front of reserve armies was set up, consisting of the 29th, 30th, 24th, 28th, 31st and 32nd armies under Lieutenant-General I. A. Bogdanov; most of these troops were later turned over to the Western Front.

The armies of the new Front were deployed along the Staraya Russa-Ostashkov-Bely-Yelnya-Bryansk line. It was decided to form a new Front to man the Mozhaisk defensive line covering the distant approaches to Moscow. The new Front was to include the 32nd, 33rd and 34th armies that were being formed at the time.

To improve the situation during the Smolensk Battle, which had become critical by then, the High Command decided to place 20 infantry divisions of the Reserve Front under Marshal Timoshenko, Commander of the Western Front. Those divisions composed five army groups under Major-General K. K. Rokossovsky, Major-General V. A. Khomenko, Lieutenant-General S. A. Kalinin, Lieutenant-General V. Ya. Kachalov, and Lieutenant-General I. I. Maslennikov.

On the instructions of the High Command, Marshal Timoshenko ordered these groups to deal counterblows from the Bely-Yartsevo-Roslavl area in the general direction of Smolensk, destroy the enemy forces that had broken through, and join the main forces of the Front, which were encircled and fighting staunchly in the Smolensk area.

In the latter half of July the battles at Smolensk and east of the city gained in intensity. The enemy encountered stiff Red Army resistance all along the front.

On July 23 the troops of the 28th Army Group launched their offensive from the Roslavl area, and on July 24 and 25 a group under General K. K. Rokossovsky, consisting of the 30th and 24th armies, from the Bely-Yartsevo area. The enemy pulled up additional troops to the Smolensk area and made an attempt to smash the encircled troops of the Western Front's 16th and 20th armies. The fighting was extremely stiff. On July 26 aided by the troops of Rokossovsky's group which included some tank units, most of the troops of the 16th and

20th armies managed to break out of the encirclement south of Yartsevo and reached the eastern bank of the Dnieper, where they joined the Front's main force and went on the defensive.

The enemy threw nine divisions and a motorized corps against Kachalov's force comprising three divisions and moving from Roslavl towards Smolensk. The Germans captured Roslavl on the march and surrounded Kachalov's group.

Here, too, the forces were unequal. The Kachalov group found itself in an extremely difficult position. Only a small part of it managed to retreat and join our forces. General Kachalov died a hero's death.

The enemy's 46th Motorized Corps took Yelnya and attempted to exploit its success towards Dorogobuzh, but was checked by the 24th Army of the Reserve Front.

To defend the Gomel sector the High Command formed a Central Front on July 23, consisting of the 4th, 13th and 21st armies of the Western Front fighting on a line running through Seshcha and Propoisk and farther south along the Dnieper.

The battle of Smolensk holds an important place among the operations of the summer of 1941. Although it had been impossible to smash the enemy, as the High Command had planned, the enemy's shock forces were worn to a frazzle and visibly weakened. German generals admitted that at Smolensk they lost 250,000 officers and men. On July 30 the Nazi Command ordered Army Group Centre to assume the defence. The Soviet troops consolidated their positions along the Velikiye Luki-Yartsevo-Krichev-Zhlobin line.

The Red Army and the people of Smolensk and its environs displayed great bravery during the battle. Heavy fighting developed round every house and street, and inhabited locality. That the enemy's offensive was halted at Smolensk for a while was an important strategic success. As a result we gained time and were able to raise strategic reserves and carry out defensive works on the Moscow sector.

On July 14, 1941, at Orsha the battery of Captain I. A. Flerov used rocket launchers — the fabulous Katyushas — for the first time.

Tribute is certainly due to Marshal Timoshenko. In those

difficult first months of the war he firmly commanded the troops, rallying all forces to repulse the enemy and to organize defences.

Hitler's political and military leadership, his generals and the German troops now had had a taste of the gallantry and mass heroism of Soviet soldiers, and saw that the farther inland they advanced, the harder the struggle became for them.

In late July Poskrebyshev called me on the phone and asked about Timoshenko's whereabouts.

"He's at the General Staff; we're discussing the situation at the front," I replied.

"Stalin orders you and Timoshenko to come to his country house without delay," Poskrebyshev said.

We thought Stalin wanted to consult us as to possible further action, but we soon found out that his summons had a totally different purpose. When we entered the room we saw almost all Politbureau members seated round the table. Stalin, wearing an old jacket, was standing in the middle of the room, holding an unlit pipe in his hands.

"Now then," he said, "the Politbureau has discussed Timoshenko's activities as Commander of the Western Front and decided to relieve him of his post. It proposes that Zhukov take over." Stalin turned to Timoshenko and me, and asked what we thought of this.

Timoshenko said nothing.

"Comrade Stalin," I said, "frequent replacement of Front commanders is having a bad effect on the operations. Without hardly any time to become familiar with the situation, the new commanders are compelled to conduct exceedingly severe battles. Marshal Timoshenko has been in command of the Front for less than four weeks. During the battle of Smolensk he has come to know the troops and what they are capable of. He has done all that could be done and has held up the enemy at Smolensk for almost a month. I don't think anyone else could have achieved more. The troops have trust in Timoshenko, and that is most important. I feel it would be unjust and inexpedient to remove him from the Front at this time."

M. I. Kalinin, who had been listening attentively, remarked: "I rather think he's right."

id von Manstein's 56th Mechanized Corps, it would have a totally wiped out. With the approach of fresh enemy es, the 11th and 27th armies of the North-Western Front e forced to withdraw to the Staraya Russa-Kholm defence .

Meeting stiff resistance in the Luga fortified zone, in the o area, the Staraya Russa-Kholm line of defence, and he area of Kingisepp-Siversky, Army Group North compris- two armies and a panzer group, sustained considerable es and could not continue its offensive on Leningrad hout reinforcements.

The outcome of the battle of Smolensk, the mounting activity d resistance of the Soviet troops of the Northern and North- estern Fronts, and of the Baltic Fleet and the air force, used a sizeable breach in Plan Barbarossa.

But what was going on at the time in the Ukraine, where the oops of the South-Western sector were waging bitter defensive attles?

Capture of the Ukraine was of particular importance for he Germans. They wanted to overrun the Ukraine as quickly s possible, and deprive the Soviet Union of a major industrial nd agricultural base, and at the same time to boost their own conomic potential with Krivoi Rog iron ore, Donets coal, Nikopol manganese, and Ukrainian grain.

Strategically, seizure of the Ukraine would ensure support from the south for the central group of German forces which was still charged with the paramount task of capturing Moscow.

From the very first days of the war, the course of events in the Ukraine was running contrary to what had been envisaged by Hitler's plan of a *blitzkrieg*. Pulling back under the impact of the German assault, the Red Army was putting up a gallant resistance.

Fighting stoutly, with skill and courage, were the 5th Army under General M. I. Potapov, the 26th Army under General F. Ya. Kostenko, and the 6th Army under General I. N. Muzychenko.

It gives me special pleasure to mention these outstanding army commanders because they had served as regimental commanders in the 4th Don Cossack Division of the legendary First Mounted Army.

Stalin unhurriedly lit up his pipe, then eyed the other members of the Politbureau, and said:

"Suppose we agree with Zhukov?"

"You're right, Comrade Stalin," several of those present said. "Timoshenko may rectify things yet."

We were given permission to leave. Timoshenko was ordered to return to his Front immediately.

Plainly, the accusations had seriously offended Timoshenko. But then, all sorts of things happen in war; there isn't always a chance to consider people's feelings as major, intricate problems are dealt with.

Following the truly arduous battles in the Smolensk area, the fighting on the Western sector had for the time being died down. Both sides were restoring order in their troops and preparing for future developments. Only in the Yelnya area the fighting continued. The Yelnya Salient captured by the Germans was a highly advantageous bridgehead for an assault on Moscow. The Nazis were trying to hang on to it at any price.

The enemy was continuing his offensive on the Leningrad sector, but despite some successes he failed to break through the Soviet defences on the march and reach the near approaches to Leningrad. During the battle of Smolensk, the Nazi Army Group North made an attempt to approach Leningrad via Luga. The German 41st Motorized Corps made its way to Luga along the Leningrad Highway on July 12, but was halted. Then it found a weak link in the defence round the Kingisepp-Ivanovskoye sector; the 4th Panzer Group was quickly brought in from the area of Luga and broke through our defences. True, it was stopped by reinforcements that arrived in time.

Another group of enemy forces, which tried to advance towards Novgorod and further on to Chudovo, met with stubborn resistance and failed to achieve any success. The advancing German motorized corps was attacked by elements of our 11th Army in the area of Soltsy. The counterblow of the 11th Army was well organized and had good air support. Caught unawares, the enemy turned tail and began a hasty withdrawal. In hot pursuit, the 11th Army inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Were it not for the German 16th Army that had rushed over

to aid von Manstein's 56th Mechanized Corps, it would have been totally wiped out. With the approach of fresh enemy forces, the 11th and 27th armies of the North-Western Front were forced to withdraw to the Staraya Russa-Kholm defence line.

Meeting stiff resistance in the Luga fortified zone, in the Dno area, the Staraya Russa-Kholm line of defence, and in the area of Kingisepp-Siversky, Army Group North comprising two armies and a panzer group, sustained considerable losses and could not continue its offensive on Leningrad without reinforcements.

The outcome of the battle of Smolensk, the mounting activity and resistance of the Soviet troops of the Northern and North-Western Fronts, and of the Baltic Fleet and the air force, caused a sizeable breach in Plan Barbarossa.

But what was going on at the time in the Ukraine, where the troops of the South-Western sector were waging bitter defensive battles?

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Meeting stiff resistance in the Kiev fortified area, the German troops executed a sharp southward manoeuvre so as to envelop our 6th and 12th armies, which were withdrawing from the Berdichev-Starokonstantinov-Proskurov line. A part of the enemy force reached the sector of the 26th Army south of Kiev. But this could have no substantial significance because the main enemy force, Army Group South, was moving in a southerly direction at the time. Our 6th and 12th armies were in for a bitter clash with the enemy force that was seeking to envelop them.

The situation was aggravated by the fact that the German 11th Army, having broken through the defences of the Southern Front, was striking out through Mogilev-Podolsky in order to outflank and envelop these three armies.

The troops of the South-Western Front, acting in cooperation with the Southern Front, mounted counterattacks to hold up the enemy advance. They inflicted sizeable losses on the enemy but failed to stop him. The Germans carried out a partial regrouping and lashed out again at the withdrawing troops of the 6th and 12th armies. This time the two armies found themselves in an even graver situation.

Because of the distance and the ensuing complexity of controlling them, the South-Western Front Command asked that these two armies be reassigned to the Southern Front, which was then under the command of General of the Army I. V. Tyulenev. Its request was granted.

During this reallocation a considerable part of the retreating units of these armies were surrounded. Lieutenant-General I. N. Muzychenko, Commander of the 6th Army, was badly wounded and taken prisoner. The same fate befell the commander of the 12th Army, General P. G. Ponedelin. A very grave situation developed at this time on the Southern Front. Its 9th Army was fighting in semi-encirclement, part of it moving back to the Ingulets river.

The enemy advance to the Dnieper and his breakthrough to Zaporozhye, Dnepropetrovsk and Odessa, badly aggravated the situation of the Soviet troops on the entire South-Western sector. Yet the German troops had paid a high price for their victory here. They were badly mauled, and had sustained heavy losses.

Since the moment I had returned to Moscow from the South-Western Front, I saw all the events I have described rom the viewpoint of Chief of General Staff because I took art in them in that particular capacity — sharing responsibili-y, the bitterness of our setbacks and the joy of our infrequent ictories, with other members of the High Command. That s why, before going any further, I want to dwell specially on he activity of the Supreme Command's Stavka, often referred to mistakenly as the General Headquarters, and to describe as best I can its role and structure, and its manner of controlling the armed forces during the war.

For understandable reasons, I am not going to touch upon anything that may, if revealed, prejudice my country's defences. Apart from the special chapter that the reader will now come to, the activity of our top command and that of Supreme Commander-in-Chief J. V. Stalin in charting and carrying out operations and military campaigns, will also be described in other parts of the book.

## Chapter 11

# THE SUPREME COMMAND GHQ

A *Stavka* of the High Command was formed on June 23, 1941. Differing slightly from what we had envisaged in the Defence Commissariat's project, its composition was: Defence Commissar S. K. Timoshenko (Chairman), Chief of General Staff G. K. Zhukov, J. V. Stalin, V. M. Molotov, K. Ye. Voroshilov, S. M. Budenny, and N. G. Kuznetsov.

It would have been far better if Stalin had been named Commander-in-Chief, as we had envisaged in the original project. After all, with things as they were, Timoshenko could take no basic decisions without Stalin approving them. As it was, we had two commanders-in-chief — Timoshenko *de jure*, as put down in the government decree, and Stalin *de facto*. This complicated troop control and caused inevitable delays in drawing up and issuing orders.

We had also suggested having N. F. Vatutin, First Deputy Chief of General Staff, in the High Command Stavka. But Stalin objected.

A group of advisers was formed to consult the High Command on various topics. But it played no more than a nominal role, because all the advisers soon received other appointments, and were not replaced.

The High Command GHQ was sited in Moscow all through the war. This had an important effect on morale. Owing to enemy air raids, its seat was moved from the Kremlin to a small detached house with reliable working premises and good communications in the vicinity of Kirovskiye Vorota in the beginning of July. And a month later, operators of the General Staff, which was an executive appendage of the High Command, moved their desks to the platform of the nearby Kirovskaya Station of the Moscow underground.

On June 30, 1941, the Party's Politbureau formed a special body, the State Defence Committee, with Stalin at its head, on the model of Lenin's Council of Worker-Peasant Defence which functioned during the Civil War and the foreign armed intervention.

It held all power in its hands and was the top organ in charge of defence. All civilian, Party, and government organizations were obliged to abide by all its resolutions and orders. To control their fulfilment, the Committee had representatives in all the territories and regions, the war-industry commissariats, the biggest enterprises, and the building sites.

At its sittings, which might be called at any time of the day or night, usually at the Kremlin or in Stalin's country-house, the Committee discussed and took decisions on all crucial issues. Military plans were examined by the Party's Politbureau and the State Defence Committee. People's Commissars who were to take part in supporting the operation, were invited. Whenever there was a chance, this practice enabled us to concentrate vast material resources at key points, to carry through a coordinated policy of strategic guidance, and, with the organised rear helping out, to dovetail troop actions with the countrywide war effort.

Heated debates at Committee meetings were frequent, the opinions firm and couched in precise language. If no consensus was reached, a commission would be formed at once, consisting of supporters of the opposite views who were instructed to report an agreed proposal at the next meeting.

The State Defence Committee adopted some 10,000 resolutions and decisions of a military and economic nature during the war. All of them were carried out with precision and energy. They gave the start to assiduous work, assuring a single Party line in the country's administration during that rigorous and arduous time.

On July 10, 1941, by decision of the State Defence Committee, the Stavka of the High Command was converted into the Stavka of the Supreme Command, and on August 8 into the Stavka of the Supreme High Command.[1]

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[1] During the war the following became members of the Stavka of the Supreme Command successively upon being appointed Chiefs of General

From that moment on and until the end of the war Stalin was Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

Once the State Defence Committee had been formed and the Supreme Command established, with one and the same person — the General Secretary of the Party's Central Committee and Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars — at their head, the structure of the country's wartime political and military administration was complete. The Party's Central Committee coordinated the activity of all Party, government, military, and economic agencies.

Now I was working directly with J. V. Stalin. I had never associated with him as closely before, and initially felt a little awkward in his presence. Besides, I knew I lacked experience in strategic matters and was never sure of the accuracy of my forecasts.

In the early period of our association, Stalin did not have much to say to me. I felt that he was sizing me up most attentively and had no fixed opinion of me yet as Chief of General Staff.

But as experience accumulated, I became more confident, more bold, in expressing my ideas. I noticed, too, that Stalin began to give them more heed.

On July 19, 1941, a decree of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium appointed Stalin the People's Commissar for Defence. And I must say that with Stalin's appointment as Chairman of the State Defence Committee, Supreme Commander-in-Chief, and Commissar for Defence, all of us at the General Staff, the central divisions of the Defence Commissariat, the USSR State Planning Committee, and other governmental and economic bodies, instantly felt his firm and sure hand.

Every member of the State Defence Committee had a concrete assignment and was strictly responsible for the fulfilment of economic plans. One was responsible for the output of tanks, another for guns and shells, a third for the output of aircraft, and a fourth for logistics, food supplies, equipment, etc. Com-

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Staff: B. M. Shaposhnikov, A. M. Vasilevsky and A. I. Antonov. The last alternation occurred on February 17, 1945, when by a resolution of the State Defence Committee, the following were listed as members of the Stavka: J. V. Stalin, G. K. Zhukov, A. M. Vasilevsky, A. I. Antonov, N. A. Bulganin, and N. G. Kuznetsov.— *Author.*

manders of arms of the service were ordered by Stalin personally to back up the respective Committee members and help them in seeing to the fulfilment of production programmes according to schedule and of requisite quality.

With the Party's political work making the due impact and with us generals improving our art of troop control through the accumulated combat experience, our resistance to the enemy grew stronger. All soldiers of the armed forces displayed heroism and dedication in battle. Military discipline tightened visibly.

Still, despite the energetic efforts of the Supreme Command and the various Front commands, the situation continued to deteriorate. Under pressure of superior enemy forces, our troops were rolling back to the country's interior. I have already said that in the early months of the war the most difficult situation prevailed in the western and north-western sectors. The strategic defence put up by the Soviet Armed Forces took shape in a most unfavourable military situation, though it was most active and resolute.

The Party's Central Committee and the State Defence Committee were deeply concerned with the country's air defences because Nazi aviation was highly active. Indeed, the enemy pinned great hopes on the Luftwaffe. The Nazis expected by their massive air raids to wreck the mobilization in the country's western regions, to disorganize transport and administration in the immediate rear, and to undermine the people's will to resist. Hitler showered privileges and rewards on his air pirates and their chief, Goering.

Supreme Commander Stalin analyzed the situation, and took special note of the deficient air defence of the country's main objectives. Thereupon, with his usual energy, he tackled the question of an anti-aircraft shield. He invited a group of ranking commanders to offer ideas on how to improve the structure and controls of the air defence machinery, and to do so within two days. General N. N. Voronov, chief of Red Army artillery, and the generals M. S. Gromadin, D. A. Zhuravlev, P. F. Zhigarev, N. D. Yakovlev, and others, helped him greatly with their advice.

The main thing at the time was to put up an umbrella over Moscow, Leningrad, and other large industrial centres pro-

ducing tanks, aircraft, guns and shells, and oil, and over leading railway junctions, and power-producing and communication centres.

The biggest anti-aircraft defence unit was formed to protect Moscow. Before the end of July it already had 585 fighter planes, 964 anti-aircraft guns, 166 large-caliber anti-aircraft machine guns, something like 1,000 searchlights, and a large number of barrage balloons.

This structure paid off. The Nazi air force was unable to break through to Moscow en masse despite enormous losses. Many thousands of Nazi bombers took part in the raids, but only a few (not more than 2 or 3 per cent) managed to reach the Soviet capital, and on reaching it were compelled to drop their deadly load at random.

During the enemy air raids, the Supreme Commander often visited the underground premises of the capital's anti-aircraft command post, and watched how the enemy aviation was driven off. The top man here was General D. A. Zhuravlev, who supervised air defences with a cool head and efficiency. After the raid, Stalin would usually stay on and talk to the operators. He asked them what they thought the Supreme Command could still do to buttress air defences and first of all the air defences of Moscow.

As the war went on, the air defence machinery continued to improve, and made a memorable contribution to the common cause of crushing the Nazi aggressors.

I can still remember the personnel of the Leningrad and Baltic Fleet air defence units, and do so with deep respect and gratitude. They repulsed the massive, almost daily, enemy raids heroically, with great skill.

The Soviet strategic leadership took some time to coalesce, going through a succession of fundamental alterations prompted by the course of the war and the general situation. Gradually, however, Soviet military science, acting on past experience, made visible progress in troop control.

Commanders, political officers, and the personnel of tactical and strategic staffs were essentially well selected from among young, energetic, and capable officers and generals. They were eager and enthusiastic, and kept improving their knowledge of strategy and their operational art. The General Staff, Naval

Headquarters, the Commissariat for Defence, Front commanders, commanders of naval fleets and of military districts, and the respective staffs did everything they could to make the armed forces more combatworthy to win a victory.

The absence of a top military body such as the Stavka of the Supreme Command at the time when Nazi Germany attacked, naturally affected troop control in the initial phase of the war, and had a detrimental effect on the general strategic situation. Doubly so, because in his earlier ventures in Europe the enemy had already acquired considerable experience in organizing warfare and sudden invasions. Admittedly, too, the commanders-in-chief of the Directions and the Front commanders were guilty of bad faults in troop control at the beginning of the war. This naturally led to negative results.

I am often asked why we were not wholly prepared for the war when it broke out and why our troop control was so faulty.

To begin with, I think, it will be only fair to say that many of the ranking operators of the Defence Commissariat and the General Staff relied too much on the experience of World War I. In theory, of course, most of the commanders of the tactical and strategic echelon, including the General Staff leadership, were aware of the changes that had occurred since then in the nature and methods of warfare. But, in fact, they had prepared themselves to fight along the old lines, thinking mistakenly that any big war would, as before, start with border clashes, and that the main enemy forces would not be committed until later. But, contrary to expectations, the war began with a massive offensive by all of Nazi Germany's land and air forces.

It should also be admitted that a certain share of the blame for the faults in the training of troops when war broke out fell to the Defence Commissar and his immediate subordinates. Nor can I, as former Chief of General Staff and the Defence Commissar's closest helper, absolve myself of blame for all these faults.

Last but not least, a conspicuous role was played by the fact that right up to the last moment — to the moment when the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union — Stalin kept clinging to the hope that he would still manage to delay the outbreak of war. To a certain extent, this handcuffed the Defence Commissar, who did not summon enough courage to approach Stalin with

the idea of forming a Supreme Command until the spring of 1941.

At the end of spring, I again had to request the Commissar, this time in most insistent terms, to tell Stalin that a plan to organize a Stavka of the High Command had been drafted by the General Staff, that he should consider it immediately, and that he should allow the General Staff to test it in large-scale staff exercises. This time the Commissar apprized Stalin, and the latter permitted us to hold the exercise — but farther away from the border, somewhere along the Valdai-Orsha-Gomel-Psyol river line, and thereupon give him the blueprint of a High Command, its functional purpose and executive bodies.

Reconnaissance of terrain for the staff exercise was held in May 1941, but the exercise itself never came about. Owing to lack of time and for other reasons we took no steps to prepare the ground for a Stavka of the High Command and its executive bodies.

most difficult period for us did not consist of mistakes alone. We had mounted large-scale operations quite successfully, wrecked the Nazi plan of capturing Leningrad, and crushed the enemy troops thrusting towards Moscow. These and other battles taught our commanders many a useful lesson. Our army matured and troop guidance improved. When the difficulties of the early period were surmounted, leadership of the armed struggle by the Supreme Command and the Front commands became far more effective.

Up above, at General Headquarters, we could see most clearly that in a war mistakes differed: some could be remedied, others were hard to correct. Everything depended on the nature of the mistakes and on their magnitude. Tactical mistakes, experience showed, could be quickly remedied at a superior level of command. It was far more difficult to rectify miscalculations of an operational scale, especially so if the command lacked the requisite manpower and weaponry or had missed the time to commit them where and when necessary.

Extraordinary efforts were required on the scale of the country to rectify the strategic mistakes of the Supreme Com-

mand and the commands of some of the Fronts in the summer of 1942 (giving the Nazi troops a chance to reach Stalingrad and the Northern Caucasus).

Looking back, I take the liberty to say that no political or military leadership of any other country could have survived such trials or found a way out of the extremely unfavourable situation.

Strategy, as we know, depends wholly on politics, and mistakes of a politico-military nature on the scale of a country are hard to remedy. Only a country that is fighting a just war and that has the necessary war-industrial capacity, can cope with them. Conversely, when the war aims are contrary to the vital interests of the people, mistakes of that kind lead, as a rule, to catastrophic consequences.

But there are also irremediable errors. Take the error committed by the Nazi leadership when it risked attacking the Soviet Union. That error originated from overestimating Nazi Germany's own strength and capacity, and underestimating the potential of the Soviet Union, a socialist country where the armed forces, the people, the Party, and the Government, stood united.

In the flush of previous easy victories, Hitler and his political and military aides were sure they would march victoriously across the Soviet Union as they had done in Western Europe. But that was their irremediable mistake. Guided by their adventurist and nationalist fascist ideology, the Nazis were incapable of drawing the right conclusions in matters that were crucial for the outcome of the war and that they should have looked into without emotion from a scientific angle, taking into account the social aspects when preparing for war.

The Communist Party and the Soviet Government studied the reasons for our unsuccessful operations in 1942. Then, relying on the indisputable advantages of the socialist social and political system, they marshalled the country's strength for a new effort to repulse the enemy. And thanks to the selfless and dedicated support of the people, the Soviet Supreme Command found the most acceptable methods and forms of struggle suiting the situation and, in the final analysis, wrested the initiative from the enemy and then changed the course of the war in its favour.

After the Stalingrad Operation, all levels of command, including the Supreme Command, attained a high degree of efficiency. Most of the commanders of Fronts and Armies acquitted themselves well. Upon losing the initiative, the Nazi command failed to cope with the difficulties both in organizing operations and in carrying them out, and this brought the hour of their downfall considerably closer. Indeed, it was the beginning of the general rout of Nazi Germany.

During the war, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet Government devoted much of their attention to the armed forces. More than 200 sittings of the Politbureau, Organizational Bureau, and Secretariat of the Party's Central Committee threshed out various foreign policy, economic and strategic decisions, which were then carried into effect through the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, the Council of People's Commissars, and the State Defence Committee or the Stavka of the Supreme Command.

The Supreme Command followed Lenin's principles of centralized troop control. It supervised all military operations on land and sea and in the air, and built up the strategic effort by calling in reserves and the partisan movement. The General Staff, as I have said, was one of its executive ramifications.

The new forms and methods of warcraft naturally required a reorganization of troop control. As a result, the General Staff was relieved of a number of functions, which were turned over to other administrations. For the General Staff encompassed all the arms and services — the land forces, navy, air force, and so on. It dealt chiefly with tactical and strategic issues, studied the situation, and analyzed and organizationally supported the decisions of the Stavka of the Supreme Command.

Following its reorganization, the General Staff gained in efficiency. It became an executive body and performed its functions with far better results until the end of the war. Certainly, faults did occur after the reorganization as well, but only in a few, and some of the more intricate, cases.

To improve control of the Fronts, the State Defence Committee formed three High Commands of Directions on July 10, 1941:

The North-Western Direction (Commander-in-Chief Mar-

shal K. Ye. Voroshilov, Member of Military Council A. A. Zhdanov, Chief of Staff General M. V. Zakharov);

the Western Direction (Commander-in-Chief Marshal S. K. Timoshenko, Member of Military Council N. A. Bulganin, Chief of Staff General G.K. Malandin);

the South-Western Direction (Commander-in-Chief Marshal S. M. Budenny, Member of Military Council N. S. Khrushchev [from August 5, 1941], Chief of Staff A. P. Pokrovsky).

When forming these High Commands, the State Defence Committee expected that they would help the Supreme Command to improve troop control, and coordinate the operations of Fronts, the Air Force and the Navy. It was assumed that the Military Councils of these High Commands would use local manpower and resources to better advantage than the Front commands.

But the first few months showed that the High Commands did not live up to what was expected of them. As before, the Supreme Command exercised direct guidance of the Fronts. The High Commands of Directions had neither reserve troops nor material resources at their disposal to influence the course of operations. Nor could they enforce any fundamental decision without the consent of the Supreme Command, and were thus reduced to the role of intermediary instances. In 1942, they were abolished.

Again, the Supreme Command supervised the operations of a large number of Fronts deployed on a huge land area. This caused considerable difficulties, especially in coordinating the efforts of several Fronts that operated side by side. A search began for new methods of control, which in the end led to an effective form of strategic leadership — a peculiar institution for influencing and supervising the activity of Fronts came into being: the Supreme Command appointed its representatives to key sectors.

There had been precedents dating to World War I, when representatives of the Supreme Command were sent directly to the site of operations, exerting an important influence on developments. In the early months of the Great Patriotic War several Soviet generals, too, were sent to the field, and used the powers vested in them to work for a more favourable turn of events. Now, after a year of fighting, the activity of Supreme

Command representatives in certain sectors acquired greater purpose. From now on Supreme Command representatives were sent only to those Fronts or groups of Fronts where the main task, affecting the course of a crucial operation or campaign, was being carried out at that moment.

The Supreme Command picked its representatives from among the most capable generals. They were expected to know the situation the the last detail, and had, as a rule, taken part in elaborating and planning the operation in question. The Supreme Command expected its representatives to guide the operation and to bear full responsibility for it, and vested them with all prerogatives of power. To illustrate this point, I will here cite a telegram from Stalin to the Supreme Command representative on the Crimean Front, L. Z. Mekhlis, in May 1942.

Sensing an attempt on Mekhlis's part to evade responsibility for the grave Soviet setbacks on the Kerch Peninsula, Stalin wrote to him:

"You have adopted the strange position of an outside observer who is not responsible for the Crimean Front. It is a very convenient position, but rotten through and through. On the Crimean Front you are *no outside observer but a responsible representative of the Supreme Command who is accountable for all the successes and failures of the Front and is obliged to rectify the mistakes of the command* [my italics.— *G. Zh.*]. You and the command are jointly responsible for the left flank of the Front having proved so abjectly weak. If 'the situation showed that the enemy would begin advancing in the morning' and you took no measures to organize resistance, confining yourself to passive criticism, the worse for you. It means that you have not yet understood that you were sent to the Crimean Front *not as a state controller but as a responsible representative of the Supreme Command*" (my italics.— *G. Zh.*).

This clearly-worded document leaves no doubt as to the duties of the representative of the Supreme Command.

As the scale of the Soviet offensive operations increased, the duties of the Supreme Command representative kept changing. During the summer campaign of 1944, for example, Plan Bagration was being carried into effect in the western strategic

direction. Under this plan — drawn up collectively by the Supreme Command, the General Staff, and the Military Councils of the respective Fronts — four Soviet Fronts, the long-range aviation and the partisans struck the enemy simultaneously. Their mission was to crush Army Group Centre, the main concentration of Nazi troops.

At that time, the situation required us to extend the powers of the Supreme Command representatives. In the above operation, they were granted the right to direct the operations of Fronts. I, for one, was assigned the First and Second Byelorussian Fronts and the First Ukrainian Front. Alexander Vasilevsky, with whom I was to cooperate, supervised the offensive of the 1st and 2nd Baltic Fronts and the 3rd Byelorussian Front.

It is my firm opinion that by virtue of the broad initiative *which the Supreme Command granted its representatives*, troop control was more mobile, more prompt, and more flexible. The mission of the troops was carried out with eminent success: the Red Army liberated Soviet Byelorussia, a large section of the Lithuanian and Latvian Soviet Socialist Republics, the western part of the Ukraine, and the south-eastern part of Poland.

Whom did the Supreme Command send as its main representatives to the active army?

To begin with, it sent its own members, including Voroshilov, Zhukov and Timoshenko. Chief of General Staff Vasilevsky, too, was continuously sent to the field as Supreme Command representative.

In addition to the main representatives, Generals Voronov, Antonov, Shtemenko, Mekhlis, and others, were also frequently picked for the job.

Apart from the plenipotentiary representative who carried Supreme Command decisions into effect directly on site, there were also special authorized representatives. They were sent to help the commands and the main Supreme Command representatives in coordinating the use of various arms and services.

I went to the active army as Supreme Command representative at least 15 times in the course of the war. Alexander Vasilevsky, too, was sent to the Fronts as frequently as I. Time and again we set out for the front lines together, and

worked jointly on such large operations as the Stalingrad Battle, the Battle of the Kursk Bulge, the offensive in the Ukraine across the Dnieper, and the liberation of Byelorussia. All those who have associated with Vasilevsky take note of his profound knowledge and clear thinking. He did not tolerate slipshod work and hit-and-run estimates. He required all his subordinates working on an operation to use precise data and to base their forecasts on accurate facts. I always recall our fruitful work together in organizing and implementing operations with deep gratification.

Supreme Command representatives did not command any Fronts. That function remained with the commanders. But they had great authority and could influence the course of battles, could rectify mistakes committed by the Front or Army commands, and helped them effectively in obtaining material or technical supplies. I recall no single occasion when the recommendations of a Supreme Command representative were not carried out.

Certainly, not all of them had equal ability and equal powers. Many had none of the powers that Vasilevsky and I happened to have. For one thing, they did not associate directly with the Supreme Commander, lacked the requisite staff, means of communication, and so on. This compelled them to use the personnel and means of communication of the respective Front or Army, which were overtaxed as it was.

The Supreme Commander wanted daily reports from Supreme Command representatives on the preparation or conduct of operations. The especially important situation reports and proposals for new operations were on Stalin's orders written by hand in one copy and delivered to him through his aide, A. N. Poskrebyshev. And if, for some reason, no reports arrived from a Supreme Command representative, the Supreme Commander would himself phone and ask, "What's up? Don't you have anything to report today?"

I remember one occasion when, at the end of September 1942, Stalin summoned G. M. Malenkov and myself to GHQ from the Stalingrad area. After hearing out my situation report, Stalin turned to Malenkov:

"And why, Comrade Malenkov, have you sent us no information about things at Stalingrad for all of three weeks?"

"Comrade Stalin, I signed the reports that were sent to you by Zhukov every day," Malenkov retorted.

"We did not send you there as Zhukov's commissar, but as a member of the State Defence Committee, and you should have kept us informed."

The institution of Supreme Command representatives survived up to nearly the end of the war. Not until the final campaign did it become redundant. This alone is pursuasive evidence that such a unit of strategic guidance was exceedingly useful and necessary.

The need in Supreme Command representatives did not drop away until the strategic front shrank to less than half of its frontage and the number of Fronts decreased. By that time, Front commanders had developed into eminent generals, and their staffs had acquired experience in organizing and controlling major operations.

That is why the operations of the final 1945 campaign were prepared and carried out without Supreme Command representatives. In these operations — the East Prussian, Vistula-Oder, and a few others — guidance of Fronts was exercised directly by the Supreme Command from Moscow. This also applied to the final battle of the war, the Berlin Operation, when control of the Fronts was assumed personally by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Marshal S. K. Timoshenko was the only Supreme Command representative who stayed on with the 2nd and 4th Ukrainian Fronts until the end of the war in Europe.

The Supreme Command was a collective body. Its work was based on a sensible blend of collectivism and one-man leadership. In all cases, the final say belonged to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

The spadework in planning strategic operations and campaigns was done by the General Staff, the executive branch of the Supreme Command Stavka with a few members of the latter participating. This was preceded by considerable planning in the framework of the Politbureau and the State Defence Committee, which discussed the international situation of the moment and studied the political and military potentials of the belligerent countries. Not until after a study and discussion of all general aspects would they make forecasts of a political or military nature. As a result of all this intricate work, there

emerged the political and military strategy adopted by the Supreme Command.

When working on a new operation, Stalin would usually summon the Chief of General Staff and his Deputy, and jointly examine the tactical and strategic situation along the entire Soviet-German front — the state of the troops of various Fronts, the intelligence delivered by the various reconnaissance agencies, and the availability of reserves for all arms of the service.

Thereupon, the Supreme Command summoned the Chief of Red Army Logistics, the commanders of the various arms of the service, and the chiefs of the main divisions of the Defence Commissariat who were to back up the contemplated operation.

Thereupon, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, his Deputy, and the Chief of General Staff would discuss the tactical and strategic capability of our troops. The Chief of General Staff and the Deputy Supreme Commander would examine and estimate our potential for the operation or operations in question. Usually, the Supreme Commander gave us four or five days for the job. Then, a tentative decision was taken, and the Supreme Commander ordered the Chief of General Staff to obtain the opinion of the Front military councils about the planned operation.

While the command and staff of the Front reflected upon it, the General Staff would work on the details of the operation and coordinate the actions of the several Fronts involved in it. Assignments would be drawn up for the intelligence and reconnaissance services, for the long-range aviation, for the partisan forces behind the enemy lines, and for the transport and communication agencies responsible for the movement of replenishments, Supreme Command reserves, and supplies.

Finally, a day would be named for the Front commanders to come to General Headquarters and present their operational plan. Usually, the Supreme Commander received them in the presence of his Deputy, the Chief of General Staff, and a few members of the State Defence Committee.

After a painstaking examination, Stalin okayed the operational plans and the time-table, and said what he wanted to be attended to more closely. The Supreme Command representative was then named — to coordinate the operation of the several

Commissar for Defence. He worked on a tight schedule, 15 to 16 hours a day. He set great store by the work of the General Staff, and trusted it implicitly. As a rule, he never adopted important decisions without first looking into the General Staff's analytic situation report and its proposals.

The situation report usually opened with intelligence concerning the enemy. The war had shown that much depended on the command's ability to reconnoitre the enemy, to process the obtained intelligence swiftly, and to draw the correct conclusions. It should be said that throughout the war, save for a few cases in its initial period, the Supreme Command had given the various intelligence agencies the right bearings. They did their job promptly and with a high degree of efficiency, and also learned to analyze the situation with great accuracy.

The Supreme Command was well informed of the situation at the Fronts and reacted swiftly to any changes. It closely followed the course of the operations through the General Staff, introduced requisite corrections, finalized troop actions and set new objectives if the developments called for it. When necessary, it saw to the timely regrouping of troops and resources to secure the goal of the operations, and in special cases called off operations.

The Supreme Commander had established a rigid routine: twice a day the General Staff showed him a situation map, pointing out all changes that had occurred in the interim. A brief note of the Chief of General Staff was attached.

A special corps of General Staff officers constituted an important unit. Together with ranking officers of the Operations Division, they did a tremendous amount of work directly in the field, including areas where fighting was under way. The corps was large enough for the General Staff to have its representatives permanently with all Front, Army, Corps, and Divisional staffs.

The selfless and useful labours of these General Staff officers have not yet been duly treated in our war and history books. They were brave, knowledgeable officers, many of whom laid down their lives in battle. All modest men, they deserve our deep gratitude and affectionate remembrance.

The General Staff officers working in the field and the Operations Division officers attached to the General Staff,

were commendable and tireless helpers of the Supreme Command.

I have already said that the Supreme Command and the General Staff saw to it that military campaigns and strategic operations were thoroughly and properly planned well in advance.

Now I take the liberty to express my opinion about the plans and decisions of our Supreme Command. All planning is futile if it does not repose on a scientific forecast of the possible course of the operation, the forms and methods whereby the troops are to attain its objective. The Supreme Command saw farther ahead and more clearly than the Nazi strategic leadership. To begin with, it had the advantage of knowing the general laws of struggle resting on the dependable foundation of Marxism-Leninism. Second, it had a better understanding of the concrete situation that determined the course of events at the Fronts. That is why, as a rule, our Supreme Command was able to anticipate what the Nazi Command was likely to do, and took the requisite steps to thwart its intentions. Cumulatively, all this ensured the high efficiency of our military planning.

To be sure, the Supreme Command GHQ could not confine its activity to just the main operations of the armed forces. The war required a firm hand, that of the Supreme Command, all along the strategic front — on land and sea, and in the air — for the forces committed in the main operations needed the support of troops in the less important sectors. To back up the counter-offensive operation at Stalingrad, for example, a number of offensive operations were planned and carried out on other Fronts as well. Their purpose was to pin down or destroy troops and weaponry which the Nazi Command might have rushed to the sector of the crucial operation where the enemy was suffering setback after setback and desperately needed reinforcements. This occurred in the south of the country, and on the Western and the Kalinin Fronts in late 1942 and early 1943, and also when breaking the blockade of Leningrad in January 1943.

Usually the secondary operations did not follow any advance plan, and were carried out on orders of the Supreme Command to suit the general situation. They were drafted in a limited time and on a relatively small scale. Yet together with the basic

operation and by the overall results, they comprised the content of any military campaign.

Planning and preparing operations is a most difficult thing, with many different aspects to it, requiring not only enough time but also a considerable creative and organizational effort on the part of a large group of people, above all and notably of the Supreme Command, the General Staff, and the commands of various Fronts. And the burden of responsibility to the nation borne by those who did the work, was truly enormous.

The plan for the Battle of the Kursk Bulge and its development, for example, took three months to complete in the spring of 1943. All the campaigns that followed were planned two or three months before the jump-off.

When working on a campaign, without revealing its essence, the Supreme Command acquainted Front commanders with the specific tasks they were to accomplish in its context. Front commanders worked out and submitted to the General Staff their ideas concerning the plan of the Front's operations. The General Staff examined, analyzed, adjusted, and thereupon reported them (together with the Front command) to the Supreme Command.

In many cases, when working on the course of the fighting in the planned operations, the Supreme Command tackled fundamental tactical issues as well as the strategic — such, for example, as the order of battle, the methods of using the artillery, mortars, tanks, etc. On a few occasions, it had even tackled concrete situation-related tactical questions when they directly concerned the fighting at key points of Fronts, Armies, Corps, and Divisions, as was the case during the defence of Stalingrad and the Stalingrad counter-offensive.

Advance planning reposed on complete and timely intelligence, which gave the Supreme Command a precise idea of the intentions and the state of the enemy.

An accurate estimate of the general military situation and of our own strength and resources was no less important. The active army, the reserves of manpower and material supplies, always ranked first in the estimates of the top military leadership. Besides, the Soviet Union was party to a coalition, and was therefore obliged to take account of the intents and actions of its allies.

The Soviet military leadership's profoundly scientific prevision of developments substantially contributed to the correct planning of campaigns and strategic operations. It enabled the Supreme Command to determine the manpower and resources that would be sure to subdue the enemy and create favourable conditions for subsequent actions.

The events of 1943 give a clear idea of how well prepared the operations of the Soviet Armed Forces were. The brilliant culmination of the Battle of Stalingrad and the expulsion of enemy troops from the Northern Caucasus were followed by successful operations at Ostrogozhsk and Voronezh, with our troops emerging in the Kursk Bulge. This also enabled us to straighten out the front in the Moscow sector, which was most important at the time.

By crushing the Nazi shock force in the Battle of the Kursk Bulge, on which the Nazi High Command had pinned great hopes, we created a most favourable situation for ourselves all along the Soviet-German front for the duration of all the further operations in the summer and autumn of 1943. In all these operations, the Nazis suffered irreplaceable losses in men, materiel and weaponry. What was more important still, the morale of the German troops fell to an unprecedented low.

Despite the absence of a second front in Europe, the Soviet Union put Nazi Germany on the brink of a military disaster. To bring about this disaster we had to organize and carry out a few more crushing offensives. And the Supreme Command, as we know, accomplished this brilliantly.

The battles that were won by the Soviet troops made a tremendous impact on the situation on other World War II fronts. It was thanks to the victories of the Soviet Army that our allies of the anti-Hitler coalition were able to carry out successful operations at that time in Sicily and the south of Italy.

The Wehrmacht's defeats in the summer and autumn of 1943 destroyed whatever was left of the confidence that the satellites of Nazi Germany had in the Hitler regime. The fascist bloc began falling apart. A still more favourable strategic situation developed for the Soviet Armed Forces. And the Supreme Command exploited it skilfully when preparing the 1944 operations.

No longer did Nazi Germany's allies and the neutral countries

The advantage in strength and weaponry, the initiative held by the Soviet Armed Forces, the favourable location of the troops, the ample manpower and material reserves, plus other favourable factors, now enabled us to approach the strategic objectives on the Soviet-German front from a new angle. The heroic and uninterrupted labour in the Soviet rear ensured a steady flow of all necessary supplies to the active army. We no longer needed to confine our offensives to just one or two sectors of the front at a time. We were now able to mount large-scale operations consecutively all along the strategic front. Conversely, the enemy's ability to ward off our strikes had declined substantially.

Before the small circle of people who had stayed on in Stalin's office after the sitting, the Supreme Commander set the question of what new form the 1944 campaign should take. Priorly he had asked the opinion of every one of us.

As usual in such cases, no minutes were kept. We spoke of where best to concentrate manpower and resources to inflict one more defeat on the enemy's main force, and to crush the fascist bloc once and for all. There were ten such points along the strategic front. And after the discussion, Stalin ordered the General Staff to draw up preliminary estimates for strikes at all these ten points.

Once the main objective of each operation was fixed and the necessary strength and resources were tentatively estimated, the Supreme Command followed its usual practice and requested the opinion of the commanders of Fronts that would be involved in the winter campaign of 1944. When all recommendations were at hand, the General Staff launched work on all these operations. Meanwhile, training and arming of reserves was begun in full gear. A big contribution was made by the chiefs of the Defence Commissariat's central divisions and the Red Army's chief of logistics.

The Supreme Commander kept a wary eye on the preparations for the 1944 operations. He had the vigour and energy to keep the back-up of the projects within his field of vision, devoting special attention to armour, the air force, artillery and the Party-political work in the battlefield and on the home front.

Each period of the war, like each major operation had

believe that Hitler's regime could escape total defeat. But the main thing was that the elements in Germany which had brought Hitler to power and had supported him in every way during the years that followed, also lost trust in the Nazi leadership. Most Germans began to see that they had been dangerously deluded by the easy victories of the first period of the war, and that Germany could not stand up to the Soviet Armed Forces and the anti-Hitler coalition.

On returning from the Teheran Conference, Supreme Commander Stalin said:

"Roosevelt has given me his firm word to open extensive actions in France in 1944. I think he will keep his word."

As he always did when in high spirits, Stalin filled his pipe unhurriedly with the tobacco he extracted from Herzegovina Flor cigarettes, smacking his lips as he pulled on it after lighting the tobacco, exhaled a few billows of smoke, and walked slowly to and fro along the carpet in his office.

"And if he doesn't keep his word," he thought aloud, "we are strong enough to crush Hitler Germany on our own."

This conversation in Stalin's office occurred shortly before a joint sitting of the Party's Politbureau, the State Defence Committee, and a few members of the Supreme Command in December 1943. The sitting made a close examination of the country's military and political situation. Vasilevsky and I had been summoned from the field where we had been Supreme Command representatives. Vasilevsky and Antonov, who was the former's First Deputy as Chief of General Staff, had been instructed by the Supreme Commander to report on the situation on the various Fronts.

The main conclusion drawn at the sitting was that the Soviet people led by the Party had at last won military and economic superiority over the enemy. From now on, our superiority would determine the course of the war. It followed, therefore, that we should map out our further moves, so as to make the most of our advantage.

The Supreme Command and the General Staff took stock of all our resources and produced a deep-going analysis of the state of the enemy all along the front from the Barents to the Black Sea. The analysis showed that the turning point achieved in the war opened broad vistas for us.

The advantage in strength and weaponry, the initiative held by the Soviet Armed Forces, the favourable location of the troops, the ample manpower and material reserves, plus other favourable factors, now enabled us to approach the strategic objectives on the Soviet-German front from a new angle. The heroic and uninterrupted labour in the Soviet rear ensured a steady flow of all necessary supplies to the active army. We no longer needed to confine our offensives to just one or two sectors of the front at a time. We were now able to mount large-scale operations consecutively all along the strategic front. Conversely, the enemy's ability to ward off our strikes had declined substantially.

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Each period of the war, like each major operation, had

its specific features. The distinctive feature of the 1944 operations was their striking power, and their suddenness at different points of the strategic front. The idea was to keep the enemy guessing, to make him manoeuvre his men and resources — and miss the bus everywhere, thinning out his troops just where our next strike was planned to take place. And I must add that the foresight of the Supreme Command proved entirely correct.

Most difficult missions were assigned to intelligence. And it coped with them splendidly, producing a sufficiently complete picture of the state of the enemy.

The *first blow* was delivered on the Leningrad and Novgorod sector in January 1944. The Nazi blockade of Leningrad was conclusively broken. The Soviet troops liberated Leningrad Region, part of Kalinin Region, and entered Estonia.

The *second blow* was struck in the Ukraine to the right of the Dnieper. This was an intricate operation and, in fact, consisted of a series of major offensives which were carried out chiefly in February and March 1944 in the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky area and on the Southern Bug. The German troops were routed and flung across the Dniester, and finally all the Ukraine to the right of the Dnieper was liberated. The Soviet troops reached a favourable line for a subsequent advance into Europe's south-eastern regions, for an offensive on the Balkans against Romania where the fascist Antonescu was still in the saddle, against Horthy Hungary, and other enemy forces.

In April and May 1944, the Red Army delivered its *third blow* in the region of Odessa and in the Crimea. Odessa, Sebastopol, and the Crimean Peninsula were cleared of the enemy.

The *fourth blow*, struck on the Karelian Isthmus and in the region of lakes Ladoga and Onega, led to the liberation of a large section of Soviet Karelia and presaged Finland's withdrawal from the war on Germany's side. The Nazi troops within the Polar Circle now found themselves in an exceedingly unfavourable situation.

The *fifth blow* was struck in June, July and August 1944 against Army Group Centre in Byelorussia, which was covering the main and shortest routes to Germany. Wiping out the German troops at Vitebsk, Mogilev, and Bobruisk, our armies also encircled and destroyed more than 20 German

divisions east of Minsk. Then, pursuing the enemy, the Soviet Army liberated the rest of Byelorussia, a considerable eastern section of Poland, and a large part of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. The enemy, too, saw these developments as a disaster for the German troops following Plan Bagration in Byelorussia.

The *sixth blow* was struck by the 1st Ukrainian Front in the region of Lvov. The Red Army force crossed the Vistula and seized a large bridgehead west of Sandomierz. At the same time, troops of the 1st Byelorussian Front captured two bridgeheads south of Warsaw — one in the region of Magnuszew and the other in the region of Pulawy. Now, the Soviet Army was in a favourable position to mount the decisive battle for Berlin.

The *seventh blow* led to the encirclement and complete destruction of German and Romanian troops in the Kishinev-Jassy region. It culminated in the elimination of some 22 enemy divisions, with Soviet troops reaching the central regions of Romania. As a result of this operation, which brought about the liberation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, Romania was put out of the fighting and itself declared war on Nazi Germany. Thereupon, our 3rd Ukrainian Front and the Black Sea fleet entered Bulgaria, where a people's revolution occurred on September 9, 1944. Bulgaria entered the war on the side of the anti-Hitler coalition.

The *eighth blow* was delivered on the Baltic shore in the autumn of 1944. All the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic and a large part of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic were cleared of the enemy. Remnants of the defeated German armies vere pushed to the Baltic shore in Courland. On September 19, Finland signed an armistice agreement.

In October, November and December of 1944, offensive operations — the *ninth blow* — were mounted between the Tissa and the Danube in Hungary. As a result, Germany, in effect, lost the last of its allies, Hungary. The Red Army assisted Yugoslavia in liberating Belgrade.

The *tenth blow* occurred in October 1944 at the extreme northern sector of the Soviet-German front. It culminated in the crushing defeat and expulsion of, Nazi troops from the Soviet North and the north-eastern part of Norway.

The major Soviet victories of 1944 were the best possible evidence of the Supreme Command's superb strategic planning at that stage of the war, and eloquent proof that our top military leadership had truly deep insight into the events. The main enemy forces had suffered a staggering defeat. The Soviet troops, on the other hand, reached highly favourable jump-off positions for the war's final campaign.

The methods of the Supreme Command Stavka, its means of influencing the course of events kept improving with each day of the war. The regroupings of troops and resources were carried out with increasing skill. The coordination in combat between Fronts, between ground troops and the air force, as well as the navy, became more and more effective. Our operatives learned to direct the troops to their goal, providing them with effective dividing lines, which they changed whenever necessary.

Yet the chief means of securing a sudden and radical change in the strategic situation were the Supreme Command's reserves. This was true throughout the war. In the chapters devoted to the heroic defence of Moscow, the battles of Stalingrad and Kursk, Plan Bagration in Byelorussia, and others, the reader will find a description of how, in fact, strategic reserves were used, and will see that their commitment in battle was, as a rule, massive and centred in the main sectors. This it was that yielded big results.

After all, however good our plans may have been as set out on maps, they would have remained on paper only if they had not been backed by the requisite strength and weaponry. The success of campaigns and operations was directly proportionate to the available reserves, armaments, ammunition, fuel, and other materiel, and on how well the wounded were treated and sent back to their units.

Activating and training reserves was no simple matter. A central administration for the activation and replenishment of Red Army troops, headed by Army Commissar 1st Class, Ye. A. Shchadenko, was formed in 1941. It supervised and controlled the enlistment of reserves, the depot and training units, and field replenishments. During the Civil War, Yefim Shchadenko had been a member of the Revolutionary Military

Councils of the First and Second Mounted Armies. He was as exigent with others as he was with himself, and acquitted himself as a skilled organizer.

His administration handled all matters that concerned replenishment and training of reserves for all arms of the service (excepting the air force, armoured troops, and artillery), and controlled the dispatch of reinforcements from the depot and training units to armies in the field.

*The supply of troops with material resources was supervised* by the Central Administration for Logistics. The work done by organizers and supervisers in this field merits closer scrutiny. It was hard work, it was work that was not always conspicuous. But the contribution it made to the victory was great indeed, and they earned the deep gratitude of the Soviet people.

After Stalin's address to the people of the Soviet Union on July 3, 1941, and the special decision of the Party's Central Committee on organizing the struggle behind the German lines, passed in mid-July 1941, partisan detachments, formed and led by local Party organizations, began operating actively wherever the Nazis had come to. Before the year's end, there were as many as 18 underground regional Party committees, more than 260 local committees, city committees, district committees and other underground Party organizations, and more than 300 Komsomol city and district committees. The activity of the people's avengers, of the secret front, grew into an important politico-military factor which, if skillfully used, would greatly weaken and help to wipe out the enemy.

During the first year of the war the leadership of the partisan movement still lacked organization and centralization. But in due course, the Supreme Command learned to control the armed operations behind enemy lines with a firm and knowing hand. This was done through the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, formed as a ramification of the Supreme Command GHQ on May 30, 1942. The partisan headquarters was headed by Central Committee Secretary of the Byelorussian Communist Party, P.K. Ponomarenko, whom I have known for a very long time. A convinced Communist, he lived up to the trust that the Party had put in him,

and became a true organizer of the secret front behind Nazi lines.

Republican and regional partisan headquarters were formed under the Central Headquarters, while Front staffs had groups for liaison with the partisan movement. As a result, the activity of the partisans was coordinated to back up actions of the regular army.

The general mission of the partisan forces was defined by the Party's Central Committee and the Supreme Command. It was made specific to fit the local situation by underground Party organizations and the command of the partisan movement on the spot.

The main task of the partisans was to create an untenable situation for the Nazis, to eliminate Nazi manpower, destroy Nazi weaponry and materiel, disorganize the work of the Nazi rear, and to frustrate measures taken by the Nazi military authorities and administrators in occupied areas. Partisan activity gave heart to Soviet people who found themselves in temporarily occupied territory, and gave them confidence in ultimate victory, enlisting them for active struggle against the invaders.

The partisans caused the enemy considerable losses, greatly affected Nazi morale, and disrupted movement and manoeuvring of Nazi troops, which had an especially detrimental effect on the operations of the Nazi Command. Despite the brutality visited on the partisans by the occupation authorities, their numbers increased from day to day, spurred by deep hatred of the enemy and the wish to crush the Nazi invaders as quickly as possible.

The tasks carried out by the partisans, their importance, show that the partisans could act only if well organized, in detachments and units. All partisan forces and underground organizations were involved in carrying out these tasks.

Day-to-day leadership was afforded by local underground Party organizations, whose great work can hardly be overestimated. And underground Komsomol organizations were their active helpers. It will be a good thing if our rising generations know all about the heroic effort of Communists and Komsomols, who organized and inspired the struggle against enemies who had temporarily overrun Soviet land.

The Central Partisan Headquarters was operative until the end of 1943. In early 1944, when the greater part of Soviet territory was cleared of the invaders, it was dissolved. Supervision over the partisan movement was turned over to republican and regional Party bodies.

Special mention should be made here, as we discuss the political and military guidance of the war, of the Chief Political Administration of the Red Army and its counterpart in the Navy, the Military Councils and Political Departments of Fronts and Fleets. Their role, like that of all other political organs of the Party, in securing victory over the Nazis in the Great Patriotic War, was tremendous. It merits a special, detailed examination.

A number of historical works dealing with the past war have looked into the question. But it seems to me that a fundamental scientific study of the multifarious activity of the various political organs during the war would be highly welcome. The work of the Red Army's Chief Political Administration became particularly fruitful when Alexander Shcherbakov, a prominent Party leader and statesman, alternate member of the Politbureau and Secretary of the Party's Central Committee and the Moscow Party Committee, was placed at its head in mid-1942.

Stalin respected and trusted Shcherbakov. Right up to 1945, Shcherbakov was simultaneously Chief of the Soviet Information Bureau. During the heroic defence of Moscow in 1941, Shcherbakov was one of those who had the knack of inspiring hatred for the Nazis who were making a desperate bid to seize Moscow at any price.

All the political work in the army, the Party's leadership and influence on the mass of the soldiers, were effected through the political bodies and the Party and Komsomol organizations working directly in units and detachments. Troop commanders at all levels had good backing from this ramified system. Party and Komsomol bodies and the political education organs, bore a special responsibility for the morale and combat capacity of each military unit. They saw to it that Communists and Komsomols should lead all the other soldiers in combat and cut short all confusion and disorganization. The political and Party organs popularized models of bravery and

daring, of initiative and presence of mind and of mutual assistance in battle. Political work kept improving all the time, yielding good fruit and making an enormous contribution to the final victory.

The activity of the Supreme Command is indissolubly associated with Stalin's name. I met him often during the war. Mostly, those were formal occasions at which issues related to the conduct of the war were dealt with. But many important issues were decided at dinners to which Stalin invited his associates. What I liked about Stalin was the complete absence of formalism. Everything that he did in the framework of the Supreme Command or the State Defence Committee, led to the immediate fulfilment of any decisions that these bodies may have taken. And fulfilment was closely controlled by the Supreme Commander himself or, on his instructions, by one of his subordinates.

The State Defence Committee and the Supreme Command Stavka were two independent bodies formed by a decision of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium, the Central Committee of the Party and the USSR Council of People's Commissars, for the duration of the war. But since Stalin headed both the Committee and the Stavka, formalities were usually dispensed with. Members of one were often invited to sittings of the other and vice versa when important issues were at stake. Such joint work yielded good fruit: no time was lost to study decisions before they were put into effect, and, besides, the men who were members of these two bodies, were always in the know.

True, such practice imposed a heavy physical burden on the members of the Supreme Command and the State Defence Committee, but people gave no heed to that during the war. Everyone did his utmost and his best. Everyone took the cue from Stalin, and the latter, despite his age, was always active and buoyant. When the war ended and his day's work became relatively routine, he seemed to grow old at once, to become less mobile, still more taciturn and thoughtful. The past war and everything related to it had a strong and visible effect on him.

Readers of the first edition of my book have asked me whether there had been mistakes in the work of the Supreme

Command and of Stalin as Supreme Commander-in-Chief?

I have discussed some of the mistakes and miscalculations that occurred in the guidance of the Armed Forces in those parts of the book that deal with concrete wartime events. I have already said that in due course, as experience accumulated, the mistakes and miscalculations whose number kept shrinking, were skillfully rectified.

Stalin made a big personal contribution to the victory over Nazi Germany and its allies. His prestige was exceedingly high, and his appointment as Supreme Commander was wholeheartedly acclaimed by the people and the troops.

To err is human, and, of course, the Supreme Commander did make mistakes early in the war, until the Stalingrad Battle. But he took them close to heart, gave them deep thought, and sought to draw due lessons from them so as never to repeat them again.

Backed by the Central Committee and the organizational activity of local Party branches, by the ardent patriotism of Soviet people fighting the sacred war against fascism, the Supreme Commander coped successfully with all his duties.

Mikhail Sholokhov was quite right in saying in an interview to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* during the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the Victory that "it is wrong to belittle Stalin, to make him look a fool. First, it is dishonest, and second, it is bad for the country, for the Soviet people. And not because victors are never judged, but above all because such 'denouncements' are contrary to the truth."

One hardly need add anything to the above. Sholokhov's words are precise and true. Supreme Commander Stalin did everything he could to make the Supreme Command and its executive ramifications — the General Staff and the Military Councils of the Fronts — truly wise, shrewd and skilled helpers of the Party in the drive to defeat Nazi Germany.

Usually, Stalin worked in his Kremlin study. It was a spacious, rather light room, panelled with stained oak. The long table in it was covered with a heavy green cloth. On the walls hung portraits of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. During the war portraits of Suvorov and Kutuzov were added. The chairs were solid and hard, and no redundant objects were to be seen in the room. A huge globe was in the adjoining room,

with a table beside it, and on the walls various maps of the world.

In the deep of the study, beside a closed window, stood Stalin's desk, eternally heaped with documents, papers, and maps. Here, too, stood a high-frequency phone, and an internal Kremlin telephone, and beside them lay a pile of sharp coloured pencils. Stalin usually made notes in blue pencil. He wrote fast, in a bold hand, and legibly.

One entered the study through Poskrebyshev's room and a smaller room of the Supreme Commander's chief bodyguard. Behind the study was a rest-room and a signals room with telegraphic appliances for direct contact with Front commanders and Supreme Command representatives.

General Staff officers and members of the Supreme Command unfolded their maps on the large table, and made their situation reports standing up, sometimes referring to notes. As Stalin listened, he usually paced up and down the study slowly, in big strides. From time to time he would walk to the big table and bend over the map, scrutinizing it closely, or he would go to his desk, take a pack of Herzegovina Flor cigarettes, tear up a few of them and slowly fill his pipe with their tobacco.

As a rule, he was businesslike and calm; everybody was permitted to state his opinion. He addressed everyone in the same stern and formal manner. He had the knack of listening to people attentively, but only if they spoke to the point, if they knew what they were saying. Taciturn himself, he did not like talkative people and often interrupted those who spoke volubly with a curt "make it snappy" or "speak more clearly". He opened conferences without introductory words. He spoke quietly, freely, never departing from the substance of the matter. He was laconic and formulated his thoughts clearly.

I realized during the war that Stalin was not the kind of man who objected to sharp questions or to anyone arguing with him. If someone says the reverse, he is a liar.

Stalin wanted daily reports on the situation at the fronts. And one had to have the facts at one's finger tips to report to the Supreme Commander. One could not go to him with maps that had "white spots" on them, or report approximate, much

less exaggerated, information. He did not tolerate hit-or-miss replies. He wanted them to be exhaustive and clear.

The Supreme Commander had a knack of detecting weak spots in reports and documents. He saw them instantly and reprimanded the culprit most severely. He had a tenacious memory and remembered everything that was said to him, and never missed an opportunity to take people to task for anything they forgot. That is why documents of the General Staff were always most carefully prepared.

Despite the trying situation at the fronts, especially at the beginning of the war, when the rhythm of life had not yet been adjusted to wartime conditions, General Staff operators acquitted themselves well. By and large, a serious and creative atmosphere evolved, despite the strain of those early days.

All through the war I never lost personal and business contacts with the General Staff, which helped me greatly in my work at the fronts or when charting and carrying out operations. As a rule, the General Staff worked up drafts of Supreme Command directives competently and promptly, and saw to it that all Supreme Command instructions were carried out. It supervised the work of the staffs of all arms and services, and approached the Supreme Command with all major matters of strategic importance.

Stalin based his judgements largely on the reports of Supreme Command representatives in the field, on conclusions drawn by the General Staff, on the opinions and proposals of Front commanders, and on special reports.

I had associated with Stalin from February 1941, when I stepped into the post of Chief of General Staff. Stalin's outer appearance has been described many times. Though of moderate height and externally undistinguished, Stalin produced a strong impression on whoever spoke with him. Free of affectations and mannerisms, he won people's hearts by his simple ways. His uninhibited way of speaking, the ability to express himself clearly, his inborn analytical mind, his extensive knowledge and phenomenal memory, made even old hands and eminent people brace themselves and gather their wits when talking to him.

Stalin did not like to remain seated during a conversation. Usually, he walked about the room slowly, stopping from

time to time, coming close to the person he was talking with, and looking him straight in the eyes. He had a sharp, penetrating gaze. He spoke softly and clearly, separating one phrase from the next, and almost never gesticulated. Mostly, he held his pipe, even if unlit, and stroked his moustache with its mouthpiece. He spoke with a distinct Georgian accent, but his Russian was fluent, and he often used figures of speech, similes, and metaphors.

Seldom did anyone see Stalin laugh. When he did, it was more like a chuckle, as though to himself. But he had a sense of humour, and liked a good joke. He had keen eyesight, and never used glasses to read, even after dark. Usually, he wrote what he needed himself, by hand. He read widely, and was well informed in a variety of fields. His extraordinary capacity for work, his ability to grasp the crux of the matter quickly, enabled him to look through and assimilate a huge amount of information — and only an extraordinary person could match this feat.

It is hard to say what feature of his character predominated. A gifted man and many-sided, Stalin could never be called a man of even disposition. He had a strong will, he was impetuous, he was secretive. Though usually calm and reasonable, he would at times become highly irritable. And when he was angry he stopped being objective, changed abruptly before one's eyes, grew paler still, and his gaze became heavy and hard. Not many were the brave men who stood up to Stalin's anger and parried his attacks.

Stalin's routine was rather singular. He worked chiefly in the evening hours and at night, hardly ever rising before noon. And, adapting themselves to Stalin's routine, all official bodies worked until late at night — the Party's Central Committee, the Council of People's Commissars, the various commissariats, and the main governmental and planning agencies. This caused great fatigue.

Before the war I did not have much of an opportunity to judge Stalin's knowledge and ability in military matters, in matters of tactical and strategic skill. As I have already mentioned earlier, in those days, when I did come to the Politbureau or to Stalin's study, we dealt chiefly with organizational issues, mobilization, and the problem of supplies.

I can only say once again that even before the war Stalin devoted a good deal of attention to armaments and materiel. He frequently summoned aviation, artillery and tank designers, whom he questioned in detail about progress in their field at home and abroad. To be fair, I must say that he was quite well versed in the characteristics of the basic types of armaments.

Stalin urged chief designers and directors of munitions factories, many of whom he knew personally, to produce new models of aircraft, tanks, guns, and other major weapons within established time limits, and to make sure that their quality should be superior to foreign models.

Not a single weapon was adopted or discarded without Stalin's approval. This curtailed the initiative of the Commissar for Defence and his deputies responsible for armaments, *on the one hand, but, on the other, it helped in many cases* to get production of a new model started more quickly.

I am often asked whether Stalin was really an outstanding military thinker and a major contributor to the development of the armed forces, whether he was really an expert in tactical and strategic principles.

I can say that Stalin was conversant with the basic principles of organizing operations of Fronts and groups of Fronts, and that he supervised them knowledgeably. Certainly, he was familiar with major strategic principles. Stalin's ability as Supreme Commander was especially marked after the Battle of Stalingrad.

The widespread tale that the Supreme Commander studied the situation and adopted decisions when toying with a globe, is untrue. Nor did he pore over tactical maps. He did not need to. But he had a good eye when dealing with operational situation maps.

Stalin owed this to his natural intelligence, his experience as political leader, his intuition and broad knowledge. He could find the main link in a strategic situation which he seized upon in organizing actions against the enemy, and thus assured the success of the offensive operation. It is beyond question that he was a splendid Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

Certainly, Stalin did not go into the large round of questions

that were dealt with by the troops and command echelons when preparing an operation by an Army, a Front or a group of Fronts. Nor was this something the Supreme Commander really needed to do. Those were matters on which he, naturally, consulted members of the Supreme Command Stavka, the General Staff, and artillery, armour, air and naval experts or experts in logistics and supply.

Stalin is said to have authored fundamental innovations in military science — elaborating methods of artillery offensives, of winning air supremacy, of encircling the enemy, splitting surrounded groups into parts and wiping them out one by one, etc.

This is untrue. These paramount aspects of warcraft were mastered in battles with the enemy. They were the fruit of deep reflections and summed up the experience of a large number of military leaders and troop commanders.

The credit that is due here to Stalin is for assimilating the advice of military experts in his stride, filling it out and elaborating upon it in a summarized form — in instructions, directives, and recommendations which were immediately circulated as guides among the troops.

Besides, in the matter of backing operations, building up strategic reserves, organizing arms production and, in general, the production of everything needed in the war, the Supreme Commander proved himself an outstanding organizer. And it would be most unfair if we failed to pay tribute to him for this.

But, of course, first and foremost we owe an inestimable debt to the Soviet men and women who went without such essentials as food and sleep to do what the Communist Party called on them to do for victory over the enemy.

I will come back to the activity of the Supreme Command Stavka and its ramifications time and again in this book in discussing the campaigns and operations in which I had the privilege to participate. At this point, however, I would like to say that each operation had its specific peculiarities depending on its purpose, on the specific tasks set to the troops, and the peculiarities of the enemy — his intentions, his strength, his capability, his location and armaments, his mobility and, if one might say so, his ability to spring an unpleasant surprise.

Operations differed in scale — in frontage and depth, and in the rate of advance if they were offensive operations.

Each military campaign or operation that we undertook called for deep thought. The same applied to a plan, which called for precise definition of the common and particular aims set the troops taking part in the operation, of their task which had to suit the aims, the operational structure and disposition.

When working on an operation, the Supreme Command attached special importance to securing close cooperation between Fronts and between Armies, between the various arms and services. All these things, including troop strength and the quantity of armaments, were first put down on the maps of the General Staff and of Military Councils of the Fronts taking part in the operation.

But that was not all. At the most responsible junctions, representatives of the Supreme Command directly in the zone of operation dovetailed various missions not only on maps but also on site, and designated the concrete time, the limits, the strength and weaponry, and the mode of action by the various arms and services so that none of their capability should be wasted or should miss the mark. And the Supreme Command had a precise idea from the daily reports of its representatives of whether or not preparations for an operation were completed.

Among the issues that came under close examination were the ways of winning air supremacy, organizing all types of reconnaissance, and reacting to situation reports.

Much attention was devoted to troop control. Drawing on the painful lessons of the early period of the war, the Supreme Commander told Vasilevsky and me many times when he sent us as Supreme Command representatives to the front that we should scrutinize how various commanders control their troops with a critical eye.

And I must give credit where credit is due. Commanders of Fronts and Armies never forgot their duty to the country and Party, and continuously learned the difficult art of warfare, becoming masters of it as time went on.

I do not remember a single occasion when all members of the Supreme Command were present at its meetings. Even

when crucial operations that involved three or four Fronts, or military campaigns, were discussed, the meetings were attended only by those who had been invited by the Supreme Commander or were to perform some especially responsible mission in the operation concerned.

The Supreme Commander did not treat all members of the Supreme Command alike. He showed deep respect for Marshal of the Soviet Union Boris Shaposhnikov, for example, addressing him by his name and patronymic and never raising his voice when speaking to him even if he disagreed with what Shaposhnikov was saying. Indeed, Shaposhnikov was the only person whom Stalin permitted to smoke in his study.

And Shaposhnikov deserved it. He was one of the most knowledgeable and profound military scientists in the country. He combined theoretical knowledge of warcraft with considerable experience in tactical and strategic moves. I, for one, consider Shaposhnikov's dismissal from the post of Chief of General Staff and his subsequent appointment as Deputy Defence Commissar for the construction of fortified areas when World War II had already begun, as a bad mistake.

On July 30, 1941, when I was appointed commander of the Reserve Front, Shaposhnikov was again made Chief of General Staff. He knew the job to the minutest detail and quickly carried out a set of organizational measures that improved the work of this most important executive arm of the Supreme Command. Shaposhnikov's diligence and skill in dealing with people had a visible impact on the general art of troop control in the active army and especially on the part of the General Staff.

It is only to be deplored that his age, the heavy load of work and, especially, his state of health prevented him from staying on with the General Staff until the end of the war. In May 1942, he surrendered his post to his first and wholly deserving deputy, A. M. Vasilevsky, for whom he had a high regard. In June 1943, Shaposhnikov was appointed Chief of the Voroshilov Higher Military Academy.

Stalin had respect for Vasilevsky as well. Vasilevsky was unerring in his assessments of the tactical and strategic situation. That is why Stalin sent him to the most responsible sectors of the Soviet-German front as Supreme Command representative.

His military gift flowered as the war went on. And whenever Stalin would disagree with his opinion, Vasilevsky knew how to convince him with dignity and persuasive arguments that none but the solution he (Vasilevsky) offered should be accepted.

Vyacheslav Molotov, too, enjoyed Stalin's trust. He was almost always present at the Supreme Command Stavka meetings when strategic and other important issues were discussed. Fairly frequently, differences and serious arguments erupted between them, yielding a good solution in the end.

Stalin paid close attention to opinions voiced by A. I. Antonov. This was true even when Antonov was not yet a member of the Supreme Command, and only temporarily acting as Chief of General Staff. Antonov's signature often followed that of Stalin on Supreme Command directives.

It will not be amiss, I think, to say a few words about Stalin's attitude towards commanders and chiefs of staff of the various Fronts. I noticed that out of the Front commanders, Stalin had the greatest regard for Marshals of the Soviet Union Rokossovsky, Govorov, and Konev, and for General of the Army Vatutin. Out of the commanders of Armies, he set apart A. A. Grechko and K. S. Moskalenko, who became Marshals of the Soviet Union, Marshals of Armoured Troops P. S. Rybalko and P. A. Rotmistrov, and Generals of the Army D. D. Lelyushenko and I. I. Fedyuninsky. Among the Front chiefs of staff, the Supreme Commander held in high esteem V. D. Sokolovsky and M. V. Zakharov, who became Marshals of the Soviet Union after the war's end, and General of the Army M. S. Malinin.

Stalin had a good opinion of Chief Air Marshal A. Ye. Golovanov, who was in command of the long-range aviation, and Chief Artillery Marshal N. N. Voronov, the Red Army's commander of artillery. If Stalin had any important task to set them, he did so personally.

Out of the naval chiefs Stalin thought most highly of Admiral of the Fleet I. S. Isakov.

A good word should also be said of A. V. Khrulev, whose opinion the Supreme Commander valued highly and to whom he turned for advice on a wide range of logistical problems.

No, I could not hope to enumerate all those who had Stalin's trust. I can only say that he knew them all personally,

and held them in esteem for their knowledge, and dedication. It was these people that he picked for any important missions.

It has been my privilege from the first to the last days of the war to participate in the work of the Supreme Command, to see the work done by the General Staff and the People's Commissariat for Defence, and also that of the State Defence Committee. I can therefore say with total assurance that the Soviet strategic leadership was of an exceedingly high grade.

In a relatively short time as the war unfolded, our Supreme Command managed to cope with the tremendous difficulties that arose early in the war, and succeeded in preventing the enemy from taking Leningrad, in crushing the Nazi forces seeking to capture Moscow and Stalingrad, routing the enemy at the Kursk Bulge, in Byelorussia, and in the Ukraine. It masterminded the battles in which the strategic initiative was wrested from the enemy, and thereupon directed the devastating strikes which secured the victorious end of the war.

This is clear evidence that the Soviet art of warfare based on the science of Marxism-Leninism was superior to the Nazi strategy and tactics, and warfare. Our Supreme Command made a profound analysis of the tactical and strategic aspects of the situation at every junction, and devised effective measures to overcome difficulties. It blended the efforts of the fighting forces and the people in the rear — the war effort of the entire nation aimed at crushing the enemy. Following their sneak attack on the Soviet Union, Hitler and his generals came face to face with an army of a new type, trained in a spirit of Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism, and concentrated on one clear objective—that of defending the world's first socialist country. The Soviet soldier was deeply conscious of his mission, that of liberator. He was ready to lay down his life for his country's freedom and independence, for socialism.

Since I am on the subject, I think it would be only right if I expressed my opinion of the Nazi High Command. After seizing a large part of Europe, the Hitlerite political and military leadership felt due to its overpowering self-confidence that the military art of Nazi Germany had attained the ultimate peak. This foolhardy confidence was not accidental. It derived from the fascist ideology of racial superiority, from the traditional Prussian militarism which had pushed Germany to the

edge of the abyss more than once in its history. Backed by Germany's fully mobilized war-industrial complex, and indeed that of practically all Western Europe, Hitler and his generals counted essentially on a lightning defeat of the Soviet Union. They overestimated their own forces and capability, and badly underestimated the strength, resources and potential capability of the Soviet Union.

Hitler blamed the failure of Plan Barbarossa and that of other operations on his field marshals and generals: the blundering fools had not managed to carry his "brilliant" plans into effect.

After Hitler's death everything was turned the other way: the accused became the accusers. Now they publicly declared that the chief culprit of Germany's defeat was Hitler. With undue "modesty", they do not say that they had been active participants in the war against the Soviet Union and that, at least many of them, were also direct participants in the evil deeds which the Nazi troops committed on Soviet soil.

For all this the nations have called down disgrace and shame upon the Hitlerite regime and its generals.

Working on war plans against the Soviet Union and on operations that would attain the Third Reich's strategic intents, the Nazi leadership saw to it that its plans should be kept strictly secret. And I must admit that it succeeded fairly well. The plan to confuse the opponents, worked out under Keitel's and Jodl's supervision, and aimed at creating the impression that the Germans were about to invade Britain, yielded no small advantages to Germany. At the beginning of the war this badly complicated the general situation for us.

But it became clear very soon that, by and large, Plan Barbarossa was unrealistic. Its main idea, we may recall, was to encircle and destroy the main forces of the Red Army deployed in the military districts along the border. The enemy hoped that upon losing these troops, the Soviet Supreme Command would have no strength left to defend Moscow, Leningrad, the Donets coal basin, and the Caucasus. But the Nazi strategists failed to attain this objective.

The fascist government of Germany and the Nazi military leadership based their plans on the supposed weaknesses of the Soviet Union. They did not think that in an hour of deadly

peril the Soviet people would rally round the Communist Party and rise as an insuperable force against them. Yet they learned this lesson the moment they launched the war all along the front.

The Nazi leadership held, for no good reason at all, that the Red Army would not stand up to the Nazi troops because it was headed by young generals who had no experience of modern warfare.

Besides, it came as a complete surprise for the Nazis that they had to fight the war on Soviet territory on what may be called two fronts—against the regular troops of the Red Army, on the one hand, and aganist well-organized partisan forces in their rear, on the other.

After the formidable setback at Stalingrad and in the Northern Caucasus, the Nazi High Command proved incapable of coping with the resulting situation. On losing the initiative, it took decisions that were not of the best, which only brought nearer the hour of the Third Reich's final collapse.

Relying on the advantages of the socialist system, Soviet military science served as the substantive factor that assured victory over Nazi Germany. During the Great Patriotic War Soviet warcraft made a big step forward and was augmented with valuable experience in tactics, the operational art, and strategy. It is acquitting itself splendidly to this day in preparing the Soviet Armed Forces for every possible eventuality, in strengthening the defensive capability of our great country.

Our Party cannot ever afford to forget Lenin's warning that as long as imperialism survives there also survives the danger of another war. It therefore devotes special attention to the armed forces, to the development of means and methods of warfare, so as to have an army and navy that are a match for their mission. The experience of the past war is used extensively. And we veterans of the Soviet Army, veterans of the Great Patriotic War, are deeply gratified to know that our knowledge and experience are benefitting our socialist country in this age of missiles, radio electronics, and the atom.

But now let us go back to the grim events of the Great Patriotic War.

## Chapter 12

# THE ENEMY YELNYA SALIENT IS ELIMINATED

It was the second month of the war, but Hitler's widely publicized promise to destroy the Red Army at an early date, capture Moscow and reach the Volga River remained unfulfilled.

This, however, did not mean that the danger for the country had abated to any extent. The enemy continued to drive forward and achieve success. The struggle was becoming more intense on all the sectors of the Soviet-German front.

The outcome of the Battle of Smolensk had a major impact on the further course of the war. Although the city of Smolensk itself fell to the enemy on July 16, the defence of the Western Front's armies had not been broken down, and they stood firmly on the way to the capital. Doubt and disappointment began to appear among Nazi officers, generals and even rank and file accustomed to easy victories in the West.

As to the morale of our troops, it steadily rose. In accordance with instructions from the Communist Party Central Committee the Red Army's Main Political Administration issued two important directives to the troops in mid-July in which it summed up the situation during the first three weeks of the war and demanded that the vanguard role of the Communists and Komsomols be enhanced in battle and in carrying out the command's orders.

The enemy had suffered heavy losses on the Moscow and Kiev sectors, but this did not point to his weakness yet. Panzer units, the air force and the infantry as well were quite capable of inflicting heavy blows at our troops by means of massive action. But now the enemy was forced to do this cautiously and not on all the strategic sectors.

At this stage the GHQ's aim was not to overlook preparations, and the direction of, the enemy's major attacks and counter Nazi manoeuvres with our own.

Having discussed the existing situation on the fronts with chief of the General Staff's operations division, V. M. Zlobin, his deputy General A. M. Vasilevsky and other leading officers, we reached the common conclusion that the enemy would probably not risk an offensive against Moscow in the immediate future. He was not ready for the operation, because he lacked the required shock troops of the necessary quality.

In addition, the dangerous operational situation on Army Group Centre's flanks would inevitably influence the course of events. The point was that enemy-occupied territory stretched in a crooked line from Yelnya to Rogachev and Zhlobin where our recently formed Central Front was located. However, as pointed out above, the Front was still weak consisting of only two armies (13th and 21st), but its southern flank bordered on the troops of the South-Western Front which defended the Kiev area and the approaches to it.

Occupying such a dangerous position for Army Group Centre, the Central Front could be used to attack the flank and rear of the enemy forces.

South of Kiev the enemy was driving for the Dnieper in all places, but had still been unable to cross the river. The main enemy force sought to capture the Kremenchug area.

We carefully considered many variants of possible operations by the enemy on this sector of the front and reached, as it seemed to us, the only correct conclusion. Essentially it went as follows: the Nazi Command apparently did not dare leave a sector dangerous for Army Group Centre — the front's right wing — without attention and would attempt to crush our Central Front in the nearest time.

Were this to happen, the German troops would gain an opportunity to come out on the flank and in the rear of our South-Western Front, rout it and obtain a free hand on the left bank of the Dnieper after capturing Kiev. Therefore the Nazis would be able to undertake the offensive against Moscow only after the threat to their central force's flank would be eliminated.

As to the North-Western Direction we believed that the enemy would have considerably to reinforce Army Group North

in order to attempt to capture Leningrad at an early date, link up with the Finnish army, and then also direct his forces towards Moscow outflanking it from the north-east. With this operation the Nazi Command would attempt to remove the threat to the left flank of its shock group on the Moscow sector.

Such were the conclusions on prospects of most immediate operations by Nazi troops prompted by an analysis of the overall situation on the fronts.

Having carefully weighed all the circumstances, checked estimates of our strength in manpower and equipment and being convinced that our forecasts were correct, I decided to report urgently to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. We had to act immediately. All of us believed that any delay in preparing and carrying out counter-measures would be used by the enemy in whose hands the operational and strategic initiative was at the time.

On July 29, I called Stalin and requested to be received to deliver an urgent report.

"You can come", said the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.

Taking along a map of the strategic situation, a map showing the deployment of German forces, references on the condition of our troops and logistics and equipment at the Fronts and the centre, I entered Stalin's reception office where A. N. Poskrebyshev was and asked him to announce my arrival.

"Have a seat. Orders are to wait for Mekhlis."

About ten minutes later I was invited to come into Stalin's office. L. Z. Mekhlis was already there.

"Well, report what you've got," said Stalin.

Spreading my maps on the table I described the situation in detail beginning with the North-Western and ending with the South-Western Direction. I gave the figures of our main losses on the Fronts and described how reserves were being formed. I showed the deployment of enemy troops at length, told about the German army groups and set forth the nearest expected enemy actions.

Stalin listened attentively. He stopped pacing back and forth, came up to the table and stooping slightly began to examine the map closely down to the finest print.

"How do you know future German troop actions?" Mekhlis put in abruptly.

"I don't know the plans according to which German troop will operate," I answered, "but proceeding from an analys of the situation, they can act this way and no other way. Ou assumptions are based on an analysis of the state and locatio of large groupings and armoured and mechanized troops above all."

"Continue the report," said Stalin.

"It seems that in the immediate future the Germans will be unable to conduct major offensive operations in the Moscow strategic direction, because they have sustained too heavy losses. Currently they have no large reserves here to reinforce their armies and secure the right and left flanks of Army Group Centre.

"As we see it the principal events in the Ukraine many occur somewhere in the Dnepropetrovsk and Kremenchug area reached by the main forces of armoured enemy troops from Army Group South.

"The Central Front is the weakest and most dangerous place in our defences. Our 13th and 21st armies covering the Unecha and the Gomel sectors are numerically and technically weak. The Germans may take advantage of this weak spot and attack the flank and the rear of the South-Western Front's troops holding the Kiev area."

"What do you suggest?" Stalin became tense.

"To begin with we should strengthen the Central Front transferring at least three armies reinforced with artillery there. One army may be obtained from the Western Direction, another from the South-Western Front, and the third from the Supreme Command reserve. An experienced and energetic commander should be put at the head of the Front. Specifically I suggest Vatutin."

"Do you mean to say that it's possible to weaken the Moscow sector?" asked Stalin.

"No, I don't. But in our opinion the enemy will not move forward here yet, and in 12 to 15 days we can bring up not less than eight completely combatworthy divisions from the Far East, including one tank division. Such a force would not weaken but would strengthen the Moscow sector."

"And we'll give the Soviet Far East up to the Japanese?" Mekhlis made a caustic remark.

did not answer and went on:

"The South-Western Front should be withdrawn right away ond the Dnieper completely. Reserves of not less than reinforced divisions should be deployed behind the junction ween the Central and the South-Western Fronts. They l be our shock force and operate according to the uation."

"*What about Kiev?" said Stalin looking me straight in the* e.

*I realized what the words "to surrender Kiev" meant for* Soviet people and for Stalin, of course. But I could not carried away by emotion, and as Chief of the General aff I had to suggest the only possible and correct strategic cision in the existing situation as the General Staff and personally saw it.

"We shall have to leave Kiev," I said firmly.

An oppressive silence set in... I continued the report trying remain calm.

"A counterblow should immediately be organized on the 'estern sector with the aim of eliminating the Yelnya Salient n the enemy front. The Nazis may later use the Yelnya ulge as a springboard for an offensive on Moscow."

"What counterblows? It's nonsense!" Stalin flew into a rage nd suddenly asked in a high voice:

"How could you hit upon the idea of surrendering Kiev o the enemy?"

I was unable to restrain myself and retorted:

"If you think that as Chief of General Staff I'm only capable of talking nonsense, I've got nothing more to do here. I request to be relieved of the duties of Chief of General Staff and sent to the front. Apparently I'll be of better use to my country there."

An oppressive pause set in again.

"No need to get excited," remarked Stalin. "However... If that's how you put it, we'll be able to do without you..."

"I'm a military man and ready to carry out any orders, but I have a firm idea of the situation and ways of waging the war, believe that my idea is correct and have reported as I think myself and as does the General Staff."

Stalin no longer interrupted me but listened to me now without anger and remarked in a calmer tone:

"Go and do your work, we'll send for you."

Collecting the maps I went out of the office with a heavy heart. I was invited to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief in about half an hour.

"You know what", Stalin said, "we've sought each other's advice and decided to relieve you of the duties of Chief of the General Staff. We'll appoint Shaposhnikov to the post. It's true, his health is rather poor, but we'll help him alright.

"We'll use you in practical work. You have extensive experience in commanding troops in field conditions. You will be of undoubtable use for the army in the field. Of course, you will remain deputy People's Commissar for Defence and member of the Stavka."

"Where would you order me to go?"

"Where would you want to go?"

"I can do any work. I can command a division, a corps, an army, a Front."

"Don't get excited, don't get excited! You reported here about organizing an operation at Yelnya. Well, take it into your hands."

Then, pausing a while, Stalin added:

"Operations of the reserve armies along the Rzhev-Vyazma defence line must be unified. We'll appoint you Commander of the Reserve Front. When can you leave?"

"In an hour."

"Shaposhnikov will arrive soon in the General Staff. Turn over your duties to him and set out."

"Do I have your permission to leave?"

"Sit down and have some tea with us, we'd like to talk about some other matters," said Stalin, now he was smiling.

We sat at the table and began to drink tea, but the conversation did not shape up.

On the next day the Supreme Command order was issued.

It did not take long for me to get ready to leave for the front. Soon B. M. Shaposhnikov arrived in the General Staff. After I had turned over my duties as Chief of General Staff to him I travelled to the Gzhatsk area where the headquarters of the Reserve Front were situated. The forming of the

armies had just ended here and estimates of additional means for the Front were being drawn up.

I had known the chief of staff of the Reserve Front Major-General P. I. Lyapin and the front artillery commander Major-General L. A. Govorov for a long time and quite well. They were military experts of a high class, and I was very glad to work with them.

I did not stay at the Front headquarters for long. Lyapin and his assistants reported on the Front's combat operations and data concerning the enemy. Particularly close attention was given to conditions influencing preparations for and realization of the coming operation aimed at eliminating the enemy force here. On the same day I set out for the headquarters of the 24th Army together with Govorov and other officers. The troops were exchanging fire with the enemy. We travelled in the grim light cast off by fires raging somewhere near Yartsevo, Yelnya and west of Vyazma.

We did not know what was burning, but the sight produced a painful impression. National property was perishing in the flames — the result of many years of work by Soviet people. I wondered: in what way our people were to respond to the enemy for the calamities caused by the Nazis along the road marked by blood. With the sword and with the sword alone, destroying the vicious enemy without mercy — this was the only answer...

We arrived at the 24th Army HQ late at night. We were welcomed by Army Commander K. I. Rakutin and commanders of the arms. I had not known Rakutin before. His' report on the situation and disposition of the troops produced a favourable impression on me, but I felt his operation-tactical training was obviously insufficient. Rakutin suffered from the same shortcoming as many officers and generals working formerly in the frontier guard troops of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, who had almost no opportunity to improve their skills in the art of warfare.

Early next morning, Rakutin and I set out for the Yelnya area for reconnaissance. An artillery battle was underway there. We visited the forward lines of the defence and discussed the situation with unit commanders. As a result we saw that the German troops had organized their defence quite

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well and would obviously fight stubbornly. They had dug in panzers, assault guns and artillery pieces along the forward lines and in depth and thus turned the Yelnya salient into a kind of fortified area.

Studying the situation on the spot we also realized that the German defence fire system had hardly been fully disclosed yet. For that reason our units delivered artillery and mortar fire mainly not against actually existing fire emplacements spotted by reconnaissance but against supposed targets. Fire of this kind is usually ineffective and requires large amounts of ammunition. As to the numerical and technical strength of the 24th Army, it was obviously insufficient to carry out a counterattack.

Gradually the situation has cleared up. Now we had to calculate.

Having sought the advice of the commanders of the army and its arms we concluded that extensive and varied work would have to be done to prepare the operation. Two-three divisions and artillery units would have to be concentrated additionally, the enemy's defence system studied to a greater depth, and logistical support increased. At least 10-12 days were required for the purpose. Therefore, the offensive could be carried out not sooner than the second half of August.

Preparations for the attack would have to be top secret for the enemy to be unable to perceive our intentions and foil the operation. This meant that until the beginning of the offensive we were compelled not to change anything in the pattern of our defensive actions and continue to inflict losses on the enemy in the former way, mainly by exhausting him with continuous artillery, mortar, machine-gun and small-arms fire. Meanwhile, we would secretly redeploy our forces for resolute action.

On August 12, I interrogated prisoner-of-war Mittermann. He was 19. His father was member of the Nazi Party, and he himself was in the Jugendvolk. Together with his division he had taken part in campaigns in France, Belgium, Holland and Yugoslavia.

Here is what he testified at the interrogation:

"Most of the division's soldiers were nineteen-twenty years old. The division was manned according to a special personal

selection scheme. It had arrived in the Yelnya area on the heels of the 10th Panzer Division."

He described the Yelnya area as the front line for a further advance into the depth of the Soviet Union. He believed that the three-week delay and the fact that they had gone over to the defensive were intended to win time during which the German Command would pull up the required reserves and reinforcements to the front.

"We've gone a long way, reserves must be pulled up and then we'll advance, this was explained to us in a special order issued by the Panzer Group Commander General Guderian," Mittermann told us.

A rather curious version of brain-washing aimed at German soldiers to explain the delay in the advance and the transition to the defensive! As they say, necessity turned into virtue.

"Our Deutschland Regiment," Mittermann continued, "was in the defensive in the Yelnya area. It was withdrawn for rest and then rushed to front-line positions again in view of heavy losses among units and unsuccessful defensive actions. Losses in the regiments are so great that logistic personnel has been assigned to infantry units. The heaviest losses are sustained by German troops as a result of Soviet artillery action. Russian artillery hits hard. Its fire has an oppressive effect on the German soldier."

Mittermann knew from an explanatory order issued by his command about the partisan movement in areas occupied by German troops that many Soviet military units and civilians were in the forests and attacked from ambush, firing destructively on their troops, and cutting communications in the German rear. At the end of the interrogation Mittermann said that his division's command had been replaced down to regiment commanders in view of losses and failures in recent operations near Yelnya...

The Stavka hurried our preparations for the offensive. In mid-August part of the forces of the Reserve Front launched an offensive, achieved some territorial success and inflicted considerable losses on the enemy. The enemy was forced to withdraw two of his badly mauled panzer divisions, a motorized division, and a motorized brigade replacing them with infantry formations.

Later it became known that referring to heavy losses the command of Army Group Centre requested permission from Hitler to leave the Yelnya Salient. But the Hitlerite leadership declined the request: the Yelnya area was regarded as an advantageous springboard for a further offensive on Moscow.

The fighting at Yelnya was very useful and instructive for our troops to understand correctly enemy defensive tactics. We saw that the Nazi units based their defences around towns and villages turning them into strongpoints. The system of strongpoints was situated mostly on the forward line of defences. At the same time the Nazis did not develop the defensive in sufficient depth. Each strongpoint could hold under fire different sectors and was intended for all-round defence. Such a system made each individual point more independent and, as the Germans hoped, should have made the defence more stable on the whole. The loss of one such strongpoint could be compensated for by resorting to the fire means in adjacent strongpoints and sectors.

It followed from the above that when attacking a strongpoint, we had to secure our flanks firmly and reliably suppress fire means in adjacent enemy strongpoints. Otherwise the advancing troops risked being caught in a pocket of fire.

There was such an instance, as I recall. During the attack on one of the lines on the approaches to Yelnya our rifle regiment (unfortunately, I cannot remember the number) captured the village of Vydrino where an enemy strongpoint was located. The adjacent units lagged behind slightly and for that reason the terrain closest to the village on the flanks of the attacking regiment was not completely cleared of the enemy. This immediately told on the regiment's position. Taking advantage of the situation the enemy concentrated the entire mortar fire from the neighbouring strongpoints against the village. The advance was delayed.

However, the regiment commander did not lose his head. He got in touch with the supporting artillery and assigned it the mission of suppressing the German strongpoints which prevented his unit from moving forward. The regiment was able to continue the advance only after that was fulfilled.

We were also able to find enemy's weak points. Counterattacks by our units showed that Nazi infantry tended to be

unsteady. Suffering heavy losses from Soviet artillery fire the German soldiers, as a rule, did not deliver precision fire. They hurried to hide in the trenches and engaged in wild firing hoping to influence the advancing troops psychologically. But they inflicted relatively light losses. Soon our men stopped paying attention to that artificial noise and successfully dealt with the enemy.

I assigned the Front HQ the task of making a comprehensive analysis of the experience gained in the August fighting at Yelnya and forward it to different-level commands at an early date. We demanded from the unit commanders that they study the strength and defensive system of German troops more profoundly, conduct reconnaissance not "in general" but specifically, to discover fire means and engineer constructions of enemy strongpoints.

Due to the measures adopted to improve reconnaissance the Front Command and HQ soon obtained fuller data concerning the enemy, his fire and engineer systems.

These data as well as information given by many prisoners gave us the opportunity of carefully elaborating, in all details, the plan of artillery fire and air strikes and assign specific missions to the units and formations aimed at completely routing the enemy here.

In this respect extensive work was done by Major-General Govorov who had excellent knowledge of artillery. And not only artillery, he was also well versed in operational-tactical problems.

Despite the tense fighting in the Yelnya area and my preoccupation with preparations for the coming offensive operation, I repeatedly turned my thoughts to the conversation I had at the GHQ with Stalin on July 29. Did we make a correct strategic forecast then at the General Staff?

Different versions now exist concerning the positions of the Stavka, the General Staff, the Command of the South-Western Direction and the Military Council of the South-Western Front regarding Kiev's defence and withdrawal of troops to the Psyol River to avoid the threat of encirclement. That is why I deem it necessary to quote excerpts from a conversation between Stalin and the Commander of the South-Western Front M. P. Kirponos on August 8, 1941. They show that the opinions of the Supreme

Commander-in-Chief and the Military Council of the South-Western Front coincided: they were against the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Kiev.

Stalin is on the line: According to information that has reached us the Front has decided to surrender Kiev to the enemy with a light heart allegedly due to a shortage of units capable of defending Kiev. It that true?

Kirponos: Good day, Comrade Stalin! You have been misinformed. The Military Council and I are taking all possible measures for Kiev not to be surrendered under any circumstances. Having launched an offensive with three infantry divisions supported by the air force on the southern face of the fortified area, the enemy drove a four-kilometre wedge into the fortified area. Yesterday the enemy lost up to 4,000 men killed and wounded. Our losses amount to 1,200 men killed and wounded. The fighting was fierce, some villages changed hands several times. To reinforce the fortified area's units we have transferred two airborne brigades there yesterday and today. In addition, 30 tanks were sent today with the mission of destroying the enemy units that have broken into the fortified area and restoring the former situation. The air force has been set the mission of assisting land troops.

Stalin: Can you say with confidence that you have taken all measures to restore the situation in the southern zone of the fortified area?

Kirponos: I believe that the forces and means at my disposal should secure fulfilment of the mission facing the fortified area. At the same time I must report that I have no more reserves on this sector.

Stalin: Transfer some from other sectors to strengthen Kiev's defences. I think that after Muzychenko came out of the cauldron your offensive in the direction you know loses its original significance... Therefore, some units will be released on this sector too. Perhaps the units released may be used to reinforce the areas north of Kiev or west of Kiev...

The Defence Committee and the Supreme Command are requesting you to take all possible and impossible measures to defend Kiev. In about two weeks things will be easier, because we shall have the opportunity of assisting, [illegible] fresh forces, but for two weeks you [illegible] Kiev [illegible]

Kirponos: Comrade Stalin, all our thoughts and desires, both mine and the Military Council's, are aimed at not surrendering Kiev to the enemy. Everything we have at our disposal will be used to defend Kiev and carry out the mission set to us...

Stalin: Very well. I shake your hand firmly. I wish you every success. That's all.

Kirponos:That's all, goodbye, thank you for wishing us success.

In the second half of August, having analyzed the strategic situation and the nature of enemy action on the Western Direction again and again, I became even more convinced that my forecast of possible actions by the Nazi Command in the nearest future set forth in the report to Stalin on July 29 was correct. That was why as member of the Stavka I regarded it my duty to repeat once again to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief my former assumptions regarding inevitable attacks by Nazi troops on the flanks and the rear of the Central, and then the South-Western Fronts.

My certainty was strengthened by information obtained from prisoners-of-war captured on our Front that Army Group Centre was passing over to a temporary defensive on the Moscow sector. The abandoning of offensive operations by the enemy here was a fact of exceptional importance in itself. As far as I know it was the first instance in the history of the Second World War when Nazi troops were forced to assume the defensive in the main strategic direction. All this confirmed once again that the forecast we had made was correct.

For this reason I sent Stalin the following telegram on August 19:

"Seeing that we had deployed large forces on the way to Moscow, with our Central Front and Velikiye Luki group of troops on his flanks, the enemy has temporarily abandoned the idea of an assault on Moscow and, passing over to an active defence against the Western and Reserve Fronts, has thrown all his mobile and panzer shock units against the Central, South-Western and Southern Fronts.

"The possible enemy plan: to crush the Central Front and reaching the Chernigov-Konotop-Priluki area to smash the armies of the South-Western Front with a strike from the rear.

Following this will be the main assault on Moscow, bypassing the Bryansk forests, and a blow at Donbas..."

I reported to Stalin that to foil this dangerous plan of the Nazi Command I would think it necessary to create a large force in the Glukhov-Chernigov-Konotop area as soon as possible to strike a blow at the enemy flank when he begins to carry through his plan. It was suggested to include 10 infantry divisions, 3-4 cavalry divisions, not less than 1,000 tanks, and 400-500 aircraft in the assault group. They could be drawn from the Soviet Far East, forces of the Moscow Defence Zone and air defence units, and interior districts.

On the same day, August 19, the Supreme Command telegraphed an answer:

"We consider your assumptions on the possible German advance in the direction of Chernigov, Konotop and Priluki correct. German progress ... will mean that our Kiev group will be bypassed from the Dnieper's eastern bank and our 3rd and 21st armies encircled. In anticipation of such an undesirable incident and to prevent it the Bryansk Front has been created with Yeremenko at its head. Other measures are also being taken of which we will communicate to you specially. We hope to check the German advance. Stalin, Shaposhnikov".

Unfortunately no specifications concerning the possibilities of the new Front and the "other measures" were given in the telegram.

Agonizing fears for the fate of the Central and South-Western Fronts did not leave me...

Some two days later I decided to telephone the Chief of General Staff Shaposhnikov. I wanted to know precisely what actual measures are being taken by the Supreme Command so as not to place the Central and South-Western Fronts in a difficult position.

Shaposhnikov briefed me on the situation on these sectors of the front and informed me on the measures taken by the GHQ to counter the manoeuvre of Guderian's Panzer Group and troops of the right flank of Army Group Centre.

He said that the Supreme Commander had given permission to withdraw part of the troops on the right wing of the South-Western Front to the eastern bank of the Dnieper. The Kiev group of our troops, however, remained in place and was

to defend the approaches to Kiev which it had been decided to hold till the last possibility.

"I personally," Shaposhnikov continued, "believe that the Bryansk Front that is being formed will not be able to check a possible blow by the enemy central group. It is true, Lieutenant-General Yeremenko in a conversation with Stalin, did promise to rout the enemy operating against the Central Front and prevent him from striking at the flank and rear of the South-Western Front."

I knew what the troops of the hastily formed Bryansk Front were worth in terms of combat, and therefore thought it necessary to report once again very insistently over the HF to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on the need for a swift withdrawal of all troops of the right wing of the South-Western Front to the eastern bank of the Dnieper.

My advice was not heeded this time either. Stalin said that he had just consulted N. S. Khrushchev and M. P. Kirponos again, and they had pursuaded him that Kiev should not be left under any circumstances. As to himself he was certain that if the enemy were not routed by the Bryansk Front he will be delayed in any case.

As is known the troops of the South-Western Front were soon to pay a high price for these decisions which were taken without serious analysis of the situation. The enemy was not delayed. An extremely dangerous breach formed in the zone of the Bryansk Front on the Novgorod-Seversky and Konotop sector. We had to urgently transfer cavalry to this place from the South-Western Front which was in a difficult situation itself.

I quote a conversation between the Chief of the General Staff Marshal B. M. Shaposhnikov and Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Direction Marshal S. M. Budenny which took place some time later, on September 10, 1941, at 6.45 a.m.

Budenny is on the line.

Shaposhnikov is on the line.

Shaposhnikov: How do you do, Semyon Mikhailovich! The Supreme Commander-in-Chief has instructed me to communicate the following order to you: urgently send the 2nd Cavalry Corps by forced march to the Putivl area where it will be put at the disposal of the Bryansk Front Commander Yeremenko. The corps is needed to close the breach between the South-

Western Front and the Bryansk Front on the Konotop-Novgorod Seversky sector. I request confirmation of fulfilment.

Budenny: How do you do, Boris Mikhailovich! The 2nd Cavalry Corps is the only element of the Commander of the Southern Front on the Dnepropetrovsk-Kharkov sector. As you know the enemy has persistently attempted to win operational space. It is also known that there is only one 273rd Rifle Division on the 60-kilometre Perevolochnaya-Dnepropetrovsk sector. Finally, the enemy is enveloping the right flank of the South-Western Front from the north. If we transfer the 2nd Corps to that area why should it be given to Yeremenko? I think the same thing will happen with that corps as had happened with the 21st Army.

I would like to draw your attention in general to the actions of Yeremenko who should have destroyed that enemy group, but actually nothing of the sort happened. If you have a precise idea of what is happening on the South-Western and Southern Fronts and, despite the fact that neither of them has any reserves, have decided to move the corps and transfer it to the Bryansk Front, I will be forced to order the corps to move.

Permit me to give a short summary of the situation.

The South-Western Front. The 4th Rifle Division of the 5th Army is encircled near Chernigov. The enemy has forced the Desna River in areas east of Chernigov and on the Okunino sector. The enemy has forced the Dnieper at Kremenchug and south-east of the city. You know about the very right wing of the South-Western Front. Kirponos has no reserves.

Southern Front. As I have already reported heavy fighting is underway since August 25 on our bank at Dnepropetrovsk. Things are becoming more complicated in the Kakhovka area, the enemy has committed not less than three divisions, and we have no solid front there.

Shaposhnikov: I understand all that, Semyon Mikhailovich. But for the South-Western Front to fight it is necessary to close the breach on the Novgorod Seversky-Konotop sector. That is the aim of the 2nd Cavalry Corps' movement. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief has made Yeremenko responsible for the operation. I request that you move the corps to Putivl without delay.

Budenny: All right. I have already summoned the chief of staff of the *Southern* Front to the telephone and he will now receive the order to move the cavalry corps. Please report my opinion to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. In particular on the actions of the Bryansk Front. Goodbye!

Shaposhnikov: I will report your opinion by all means. Best wishes!

Much time has passed since then, but I still cannot think of these events without being agitated. I believe that the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was mistaken when he demanded that the Command of the South-Western Front hold the defence line west of the Dnieper and west of Kiev to the last possibility. I have said above of what had happened of this.

There is no denying the fact that even the thought that Kiev might be lost was painful for every Soviet person, but in deciding the fate of the Ukraine's capital account should have been taken of all the military and political factors. War is war, and if it is necessary, if a large army group is threatened with encirclement and destruction, it must be rapidly withdrawn from under enemy blows to avoid serious defeat and unnecessary losses.

When I touch upon the events at Yelnya I invariably recall my personal feelings in those difficult days. The Yelnya operation was my first independent operation, my first test of operational-strategic abilities in the big war against Nazi Germany. It is therefore understandable with what concern, particular care and attention I set about organizing and implementing it.

Soon a Supreme Command directive arrived at the front. The second point said:

"Continuing to consolidate with its main forces the defence zone along the Ostashkov-Selizharovo-Olenino-the Dnieper river (west of Vyazma)-Spas Demensk-Kirov line, the troops of the Reserve Front will launch an offensive with the left-flank 24th and 43rd armies on August 30 with the aim of defeating the Yelnya enemy group, capturing Yelnya, and further attacking towards Pochinki and Roslavl to come out on the Dolgiye Nivy-Khislavichi-Petrovichi line on September 8 1941..."

The Supreme Command's orders conformed to our proposals presented in Moscow. Since the enemy front had the shape of a large arc bulging in our direction, the idea of cutting it at the

Western Front and the Bryansk Front on the Konotop-Novgorod Seversky sector. I request confirmation of fulfilment.

Budenny: How do you do, Boris Mikhailovich! The 2nd Cavalry Corps is the only element of the Commander of the Southern Front on the Dnepropetrovsk-Kharkov sector. As you know the enemy has persistently attempted to win operational space. It is also known that there is only one 273rd Rifle Division on the 60-kilometre Perevolochnaya-Dnepropetrovsk sector. Finally, the enemy is enveloping the right flank of the South-Western Front from the north. If we transfer the 2nd Corps to that area why should it be given to Yeremenko? I think the same thing will happen with that corps as had happened with the 21st Army.

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base with simultaneous strikes converging on a point west of Yelnya suggested itself. We also knew that the main forces of Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group had already moved south, while there were no large mobile reserves in the depth of the German defence. We instructed the troops to apply pressure on a number of other sectors along the entire Yelnya salient with secondary forces to prevent the Nazi command from concentrating efforts on the decisive sectors.

At dawn on August 30, following a short artillery attack, the troops of the Reserve Front launched a resolute offensive. The main blow was delivered by the 24th Army commanded by Major-General K. I. Rakutin. Its units were advancing on Yelnya from the north-east. Several elements of the 43rd Army were advancing from the south-east towards them.

In those days when the Yelnya operation was unfolding the enemy had turned the main forces of Guderian's 2nd Panzer Group towards Konotop as we had expected. The Nazi Command began to carry out its plan to surround and destroy our Kiev army group. That was why now it was particularly important for the Nazi Command not to allow the defence at Yelnya to be breached and the Reserve Front to come out on the flank and in the rear of Army Group Centre.

The fighting on all the sectors of the front was desperate and heavy on both sides. The enemy confronted our advancing divisions with well-organized dense artillery and mortar fire. On our part we also committed all the available aircraft, tanks, artillery and rocket launchers.

Making use of all kinds of military hardware, combining fire with skilful manoeuvring, our rifle units, artillery, pilots and tankmen acting in close cooperation delivered strong blows at the enemy giving the Nazis no respite by day or by night. The German 10th panzer, 17th Motorised and 15th Infantry divisions were routed.

The Nazi Command pinned great hopes on the SS Reich Motorized Division which had been hastily transferred to Yelnya and included picked regiments Germany, Fuhrer, and ELF. Many leaflets of the Nazi Command were found in the zone of that division's defence. The leaflets praised the valour of Nazi soldiers and expressed certainty that they would win victories in the future, too.

However, Hitler's hopes were not to be realised. As the other German units on the salient the SS division suffered irretrieveable losses as a result of shattering blows by our units.

On September 1, 1941, I was summoned to the telegraph apparatus by Poskrebyshev.

General of the Army Zhukov is on the line.

Poskrebyshev is on the line.

Poskrebyshev: How do you do! I am transmitting Comrade Stalin's request. Can you leave for Moscow directly? If there is any possibility to do so, set out transferring your duties to Rakutin or Bogdanov for the time of your absence.

Zhukov: I have just received unfavourable reports about the 211th Division which had been operating in the Roslavl area. The division has retired 5-6 kilometres thus creating a disadvantageous situation for the 149th Rifle Division. In view of the complicated situation I would like to travel to the zone of the 211th Division at night and restore order there. For that reason I would request, if possible, to have my arrival put off, if not I will set out immediately.

Things are developing quite well at Yelnya... We have reached the Yelnya-Smolensk railway. If I am ordered to leave, I will leave Bogdanov as deputy and order him to pass the command of the group on the Roslavl sector to Sobennikov. I await Comrade Stalin's orders.

Stalin: How do you do, Comrade Zhukov! In this case put off your trip to Moscow and travel to the front lines.

Zhukov: How do you do, Comrade Stalin! Should I still be ready to go to the General Headquarters in a couple of days or can I work according to my plan?

Stalin: You can work according to your plan.

Zhukov: Fine. Best wishes!

Meanwhile the enemy refused to yield and stubbornly held on to every height and every favourable line. The enemy command committed the fresh 157th, 178th, 268th and 292nd infantry divisions to battle. But even these considerable reinforcements failed to break the attacking spirit of the Soviet troops. Our units did not permit the enemy to dig in, enveloped him from the flanks, and cut off escape routes. The bottleneck of the Yelnya Salient was increasingly narrowed by steel pincers.

Soviet men, commanders and political workers showed mod-

els of military valour in fierce fighting with the Nazis. The 100th Rifle Division commanded by Major-General I. N. Russiyanov displayed daring, courage and efficient organisation. The division was assigned the mission of breaching the enemy defence on a 6-kilometre sector by means of a strike from the north, smash the enemy units facing it and cut off escape routes for the enemy group from the Yelnya area westward.

I knew General Russiyanov very well: in 1933 we had worked together in the Slutsk garrison in Byelorussia. He had commanded a rifle regiment then. He was a very capable commander and his regiment had always been among the best.

The 100th Division prepared for the offensive from August 22 to 29. Reconnaissance of the enemy and the terrain was organized in the zone of the coming operations. On August 23 General Russiyanov carried out a reconnaissance mission with regiment, battalion and company commanders. All questions pertaining to specification of the combat missions and organization of cooperation between infantry and artillery were elaborated. Political work aimed at fulfilment of the combat mission was carried on continuously in the units before the beginning of the offensive and during the fighting.

During the preparations I repeatedly visited the units, and was quite certain that we would succeed.

In the morning of August 30 the 100th Division launched the offensive together with other units of the 24th Army. The enemy resisted desperately. The 85th Rifle Regiment was most successful, breaching the enemy defence during a night battle. To achieve success on the main sector on the night before September 3 the division commander transferred to this regiment's zone all the elements of the adjacent 335th Rifle Regiment on the left.

Having overcome stubborn enemy resistance at the end of September 5 units of the 100th Division drove a deep wedge into the enemy defences and reached the rear routes of the enemy group thereby helping other formations of the army to gain possession of the city,

The 100th Rifle Division was renamed the 1st Guards Rifle Division for combat feats, efficient organization and military skill in fighting against the Nazi invaders.

The 127th Rifle Division commanded by Colonel A. Z. Aki-

menko, the 153rd Rifle Division commanded by Major-General N. A. Gagen, and the 161st Rifle Division commanded by Colonel P. F. Moskvitin fought bravely for Yelnya. These divisions were renamed the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Guards Rifle divisions, respectively.

The order of the People's Commissar for Defence No. 308 of September 18, 1941, read:

"The 100th, 127th, 153rd and 161st Rifle divisions have shown models of courage, daring and efficient organisation in numerous battles for our Soviet Motherland against the Hitlerite hordes of Nazi Germany. Under the difficult combat conditions these divisions repeatedly inflicted crushing defeats on the Nazi troops, forcing them to flee and instilling terror in them.

"Why were these rifle divisions able to defeat the enemy and drive back the vaunted German troops?

"First of all, in the offensive they did not advance blindly, headlong, but only after careful reconnaissance, after serious preparations, after they had discovered enemy weak points and secured their flanks.

"Second, in breaching the enemy front they did not only advance forward, but tried to widen the breach by operating in the nearest enemy rear, to the right and to the left of the breach.

"Third, capturing territory from the enemy they consolidated the success by digging in on the new place, organizing strong battle outposts for the night and sending forward serious reconnaissance to probe the retreating enemy again.

"Fourth, taking up defensive positions they effected not passive but active defence... They did not wait for the enemy to attack and drive them back, but counterattacked themselves to discover enemy weak spots, improve their own positions and at the same time steel their regiments in the course of counterattacks to prepare them for the offensive.

"Fifth, when the enemy applied pressure these divisions responded to enemy strikes by their own well-organized strikes.

"And last but not least, the commanders and the commissars in these divisions behaved bravely and were exacting knowing how to make their subordinates to carry out orders and

not fearing to punish those who disobeyed orders and violated discipline."

Subsequently, a numerous contingent of Soviet Guards arose in the Red Army emulating the first guards divisions. These were fundamentally new, truly people's Guards. They embodied the best national traditions of all our peoples. Many internationalist fighters served under the banner of the Soviet Guards: Spaniard Ruben Ibarruri (Dolores Ibarruri's son), Czech Otakar Jaroš and others.

Units of the 107th Rifle Division commanded by Colonel P. V. Mironov fought heroically at Yelnya. The division had been awarded a challenge Red Banner in peacetime for successes in military and political training. That high award was shown to have been fully deserved on the battlefield. The men destroyed up to five regiments of Nazi infantry, including the regiment Führer of the SS Reich Division.

I personally witnessed the fierce battle waged by this division's 586th Rifle Regiment commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel I. M. Nekrasov from the commander's observation post.

The regiment took the village of Voloskovo by storm but found itself surrounded all of a sudden. Despite a concussion suffered in the fighting Lieutenant-Colonel Nekrasov continued to command the fighting which lasted for three days. Supported by the other units of the 107th Division, the artillery and aviation, the regiment not only broke out of encirclement but also smashed the enemy capturing an important strong point, the railway station, in the process. Particular skill was shown by the regiment's battalion commanded by N. D. Kozin (now Major-General). I also observed his excellent tactical abilities and personal courage later in fighting at Belgorod and in Berlin.

The number of such examples of real heroism and valour in those days could be multiplied indefinitely!

Taking advantage of darkness and the fact that the bottleneck had not been closed yet, the surviving enemy troops retreated from the Yelnya area leaving many dead and wounded, smashed panzers and heavy weapons on the battlefield. During the fighting in the Yelnya area up to five divisions had been routed, the enemy lost 45,000-47,000 killed and wounded. The enemy paid a high price for the attempt to hold on to the Yelnya Salient.

Our troops entered Yelnya in the morning on September 6. Soon residents hiding from the Nazis appeared in the city.

I gave a short report to Stalin on the course of the fighting and overall results of the Yelnya operation. I described the actions of the brave units, formations and their commanders and the losses of the Nazi troops. According to pows some units had no mortars or artillery left at all. The enemy had lately committed panzers and aviation only in invidiual groups and only to repulse our attacks on the most important sectors. Apparently, they had transferred these forces to other sectors.

Our artillery operated very well even in the newly formed divisions. The rocket artillery devastated everything. I examined the places which had been attacked by rockets and saw that the defence facilities had been razed to the ground. The main enemy defensive stronghold, Ushakovo, had been completely destroyed as a result of rocket volleys, and the dugouts were ploughed under.

On September 7, pursuing the enemy our units reached the Stryana River, forced it and were assigned to follow up the offensive in cooperation with a group of troops of the Western Front under General P. P. Sobennikov.

The defeat of the enemy Yelnya group in the course of the successful operation hightened the morale among the troops and strengthened their faith in victory. The units countered enemy attacks more resolutely, fought the enemy with fire and counterattacked with unanimous effort. Although we failed to complete the encirclement of the enemy and take the Yelnya group prisoner (we did not have sufficient forces then, in particular tanks), on September 8 the situation was in our favour: the dangerous enemy Yelnya Salient on the left flank of the 24th Army had been eliminated.

Not everywhere did events develop smoothly. I would like to describe one unfortunate occurrence. Having been assigned to capture a bridgehead on the western bank of the Stryana River a rifle division of the 43rd Army did not secure its left flank after forcing the river and moved quickly ahead without sufficient reconnaissance. Having failed to take the required measures to provide for combat security the young and insufficiently experienced commander committed a serious mistake. The enemy immediately took advantage of that

mistake. A tank counterattack disrupted the division's battle formation. The Soviet soldiers fought stubbornly, skilfully repelling enemy attacks and inflicting considerable losses on the enemy. The enemy panzer units sustained particularly telling losses due to our anti-tank and divisional artillery.

It is difficult to say now which side suffered more losses. The Nazi counterattack was repulsed but we were also compelled to halt the offensive on this sector. Such was the price of unconsidered action by the division commander. I was forced to remain with the commander on his observation post almost till night on September 9 to correct the mistakes that had been committed.

A telephone message arrived unexpectedly from Shaposhnikov in the daytime: the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was summoning me to GHQ at 8 pm.

There was nothing more in the message, and it was difficult to understand the reason why I was being summoned. I had to go but the situation required my presence here until order had been restored on the army's left flank. Certain other combat orders had to be issued to the army commander. In addition, Moscow was a long distance away. An estimate showed that I would be late for the appointed time.

Stalin was extremely intolerant of late-arrivals when he summoned anyone. But what could I do? The situation in war does not take into account the character traits of the commanders. It was necessary to decide correctly what was more important: to complete the mission on the field of battle or to arrive at the prescribed time to one's senior commander on his call overlooking the circumstances?

I believe that a person who is incapable of solving such a problem correctly cannot claim to be a commander. After thinking for a short time I sent the following telephone message to the Chief of General Staff: "Report to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief that in view of the situation I will arrive one hour late."

I will not conceal the fact that all the way to Moscow I wondered how to explain the situation on the left flank of the 24th Army in a more convincing way so that Stalin would correctly understand the reason for my delay.

I arrived in the Kremlin in pitch darkness. Suddenly I was

blinded by a flashlight. The car stopped. In the approaching officer I recognized chief of the security department General Vlasik. We greeted each other.

"The Supreme Commander-in-Chief has ordered to meet you and take you to his flat."

I came out of the car and followed the general.

It was no use asking anything, because I would not get the answers to the questions which interested me.

As I climbed the stairway to the second storey where Stalin's flat was I had still not decided what I would say as an excuse for my delay.

Entering the lunchroom where Stalin, V. M. Molotov, A. S. Shcherbakov and other Politbureau members were seated round a table I said:

"Comrade Stalin, I am an hour late in arriving."

Stalin looked at his watch and said:

"An hour and five minutes," and added, "sit down and have something to eat if you're hungry."

The Supreme Commander-in-Chief was examining the map of the situation at Leningrad. Those who were present sat in silence. I did not have anything to eat and also remained silent. Finally, Stalin broke away from the map and addressing me said:

"We have discussed the situation with Leningrad once again. The enemy has taken Schlüsselburg and bombed the Badayev food stores on September 8. Large supplies of food have perished. We have no communications with Leningrad by land. The population is in a difficult situation. The Finnish troops are advancing from the north on the Karelian Isthmus, while the Nazi troops of Army Group North reinforced by the 4th Panzer Group are driving towards the city from the south."

The Supreme Commander fell silent and turned to the map again.

One of the State Defence Committee members remarked:

"We have reported to Comrade Stalin that the command of the Leningrad Front would hardly be able to straighten out the situation."

Stalin eyed the person who had spoken with reproach but remained silent examining the map again. Suddenly he asked:

"Comrade Zhukov, how do you appraise the situation on the Moscow sector?"

I understood him and caught on to the thought linking together the situation on different fronts, but did not answer right away.

"I believe that the Germans must replenish their units considerably at the present time. According to prisoners from Army Group Centre the enemy has suffered heavy losses. In some units they reach fifty per cent. Besides, without completing the operation at Leningrad and linking up with the Finnish troops, the Germans would hardly begin an offensive on the Moscow sector... However, this is my personal opinion. The Hitlerite command may have different plans and intentions. In any case, we must always be ready for steadfast defensive actions on the Moscow sector."

Stalin nodded satisfied, then asked abruptly".

"Now, how did the units of the 24th Army operate?"

"They fought well, Comrade Stalin." I answered, "particularly the 100th, 127th, 153rd and 161st Rifle divisions."

"How do you explain the success scored by these divisions, Comrade Zhukov, and what is your opinion of the abilities of the army's command and political personnel?"

I told him what I thought. Stalin listened attentively for about fifteen minutes and made short notes in a pad, then he said:

"Well done! This is just what we need at this point."

Then he suddenly added:

"You will have to fly to Leningrad and take over command of the Front and the Baltic Fleet from Voroshilov."

The proposal was completely unexpected for me, nevertheless I said that I was ready to carry out the mission.

"Very well," said Stalin.

"You must be aware," he continued, "that in Leningrad you will have to fly over the front line or over Lake Ladoga which is controlled by the German air force."

Then the Supreme Commander took a pad from the table and wrote something in bold handwriting. Folding the paper he handed it to me:

"Present this note to Comrade Voroshilov personally."

The note read: "Turn over command of the Front to Zhukov,

and immediately fly to Moscow." Stalin added:

"The Supreme Command order on your appointment will be issued when you arrive in Leningrad."

I realized that these words reflected concern that our flight might end badly.

Before leaving I asked the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to permit me to take along two-three generals who would be useful on the spot.

"Take anyone you want," answered Stalin.

Then, remaining silent for a while, he said:

"Things are going badly in the South-Western Direction. We have decided to replace the commander-in-chief there. Whom do you think we should send there?"

"Lately Marshal Timoshenko has had extensive practice in organizing combat operations, and he knows the Ukraine very well. I advise you to send him," I answered.

"You're probably right. And whom will we appoint to command the Western Front instead of Timoshenko?"

"Commander of the 19th Army Lieutenant-General Konev."

Stalin consented to this too. He telephoned Shaposhnikov right away and instructed him to summon Marshal Timoshenko and transmit the order to Konev on his appointment Commander of the Western Front.

I was about to take my leave when Stalin asked:

"How do you appraise the enemy's further plans and potentialities?"

Thus I gained another opportunity to attract the particular attention of the Stavka to the dangerous situation in the Ukraine. And I said:

"At the present time, besides Leningrad the most dangerous sector for us is the South-Western Front. I believe that in the nearest days a difficult situation may arise there. Army Group Centre which has reached the Chernigov-Novgorod Seversky area may run over the 21st Army and break into the rear of the South-Western Front. I am certain that Army Group South which has seized a bridgehead in the Kremenchug area will coordinate its operations with Guderian's army. A serious threat hangs over the South-Western Front. I recommend once again to immediately withdraw the Kiev group to the eastern bank of the Dnieper river and build up reserves

somewhere in the Konotop area consisting of troops from this group.

"And what about Kiev?"

"However hard it may be, Comrade Stalin, Kiev must be abandoned. There is no other way out."

Stalin removed the receiver and called Shaposhnikov.

"What are we going to do with the Kiev group?" he asked. "Zhukov insists that we immediately withdraw it."

I did not hear what Shaposhnikov answered, but in conclusion Stalin told him:

"Timoshenko will be here tomorrow. Consider the question with him, and in the evening we'll talk it over with the Front's Military Council."

Such a talk between the Stavka and the Military Council of the South-Western Front took place two days later, on September 11. Here it is:

Kirponos, Burmistenko and Tupikov are on the line. Stalin, Shaposhnikov and Timoshenko here.

Stalin: Your proposal to withdraw the troops beyond the river, you know, seems dangerous to me...

In the given situation on the eastern bank of the Dnieper, the withdrawal of troops you propose would mean encirclement of our troops, because the enemy would advance against us not only from Konotop, that is from the north, but also from the south, that is from Kremenchug, and also from the we since if our troops were to be withdrawn from the Dniep the enemy would instantly occupy the eastern bank of th Dnieper and would begin to attack. If the enemy Konoto group links up with the Kremenchug group you will b surrounded.

As you see, your proposals on the immediate withdrawa of the troops without preliminary preparation of the lin along the Psyol River, first of all, and, second, without desperat attacks against the enemy Konotop group in cooperation with the Bryansk Front — I repeat without these conditions your proposals on withdrawal of troops are dangerous and may lead to a catastrophe. What is the way out? It can be the following:

F i r s t. Immediately regroup forces, if only by drawing on the Kiev fortified area and other troops and launch desperate

attacks against the enemy Konotop group in cooperation with Yeremenko concentrating nine-tenths of the air force strength here. Yeremenko has already been issued relevant instructions. As to Petrov's air force group we relocated it from Kharkov by a special order today turning it over to the South-Western Front.

S e c o n d. Immediately organize a defensive line along the Psyol River or somewhere near that line deploying a large artillery group facing north and west and withdrawing 5-6 divisions to that line.

T h i r d. After creating an assault force against the enemy Konotop group and after creating a defensive line on the Psyol River, in other words, after all that is done, begin evacuation of Kiev. Prepare carefully to blow up the bridges.

Leave no boats or pontoons on the Dnieper and destroy them, and after evacuating Kiev dig in on the eastern bank of the Dnieper preventing the enemy from breaking through.

Cease, after all, searching for new lines to retreat to, and search for ways to resist and only resist.

Kirponos. We had no intention of withdrawing the troops before we were asked to present our considerations on withdrawal of troops to the east with indicating relevant lines, but only requested that our Front be reinforced with reserves in view of the fact that the front has extended to more than 800 kilometres.

Two rifle divisions with artillery are being taken from Kostenko's army, in accordance with instructions from the Supreme Command received in the early hours of September 11, and transferred by railway to the Konotop sector with the aim of destroying, jointly with Podlas' and Kuznetsov's armies, the enemy motorized group that has broken through towards Romny. In our opinion no more troops should be taken from the Kiev fortified area, since two-and-a-half rifle divisions have already been withdrawn from there for the Chernigov sector. Only some of the artillery may be taken from the Kiev fortified area.

*Supreme Command instructions just received by telegraph* will immediately be implemented. That's all.

Stalin: F i r s t, the proposals to withdraw the troops from the South-Western Front originated from you and from

Budenny, Commander-in-Chief of the South-Western Direction. Here is an excerpt from his report:

"Shaposhnikov pointed out that the Supreme Command considers withdrawal of units of the South-Western Front to the east premature... If the Supreme Command does not have the possibility to concentrate such a strong group at present, the withdrawal of the South-Western Front is quite timely."

As you see Shaposhnikov is against withdrawal of troops, while the commander-in-chief is for it, as was the South-Western Front which was for immediate troop withdrawal.

S e c o n d. Keep us systematically informed concerning measures to organize an assault force against the enemy Konotop group and preparations of defences along the line you know.

T h i r d. Do not leave Kiev and do not blow up the bridges without permission of the Supreme Command. Goodbye!

...Bidding me farewell before my departure for Leningrad the Supreme Commander-in-Chief said:

"We are relying on you."

I dropped in to see Vasilevsky who was the first deputy Chief of General Staff at the time. He was working on problems of the South-Western Direction. I asked Vasilevsky how he appraised the situation on this direction, and he said:

"I think withdrawal of troops beyond the Dnieper is long overdue..."

Coming in to see Shaposhnikov I arranged with him to communicate through remaining lines and by wireless and asked his opinion on the existing situation and his prognosis for the nearest future. He gladly shared his thoughts.

To this day I recall Shaposhnikov and always feel great gratitude for the intelligent advice he invariably gave me.

In regard to Leningrad Shaposhnikov was optimistic.

At this point I would like to interrupt the more or less consecutive account of the course of events. The first, extremely grim two-and-a-half months of the war had passed. Our losses were very heavy. The air force of the frontier districts lost nearly 1,200 aircraft in the first day of the war. Supported by numerous aircraft enemy armoured and motorized forma-

tions continued to move forward driving wedges between our troops, attacking groups from the flanks, destroying communication hubs and lines. Many thousands of Soviet soldiers and civilians were killed...

At the same time from the very outset everything was developing not as was planned by the German High Command. It is yet to be analyzed by historians how, consecutively, against the seemingly favourable victorious background, the Nazis' intentions were foiled one after another. All this had far-reaching consequences about which we will have occasion to set forth our opinion.

What did the Nazi troops stumble upon when they made the first step on our country's territory? What prevented them from advancing at the usual rates above all? One can firmly say that it was the mass-scale heroism of our troops, their fierce resistance, steadfastness, the ardent patriotism of the armed forces and the people.

History knows quite a few instances when troops rapidly lost their ability to resist and abandoning excellent weapons simply fled. No one can draw a clear line between the role played by weapons, military hardware and the morale of the troops. But there is no doubt that, other conditions being equal, the greatest battles and whole wars were won by the troops showing an iron will for victory, awareness of purpose, tenacity and loyalty to the colours under which they fought.

In this connection, I think it would be fitting to let the enemy we fought in the Great Patriotic War speak for himself. Most of the sources I quote from were written in the early days and not subsequent years when political, propaganda and even personal interests could influence the authors. It is to be taken into account that for a number of years before the invasion of the USSR Nazi newspapers, radio and documents were naturally marked by a victorious tone. And it is not so important on what front and under whose command the troops mentioned in the sources fought. The important thing is the general trend in appraising the situation and course of events, the conduct of soldiers and officers in the period when we were suffering defeats, and when it was incredibly difficult for us.

Of course, a lot lay in store for us. The Soviet people realized that a long struggle lay ahead and that Nazi Germany would

throw more and more forces to the Eastern front until she was exhausted completely. But the reader should see how the German victorious tone began gradually to abate at the first operational and tactical failures on the Eastern front and was replaced by surprise and disappointment.

Let us see what our enemies say.

Major-General von Buttlar. "War in Russia".
An excerpt from the book *1939-1945 World War.*

"The 6th Army was set the task of breaking through the Russian frontier defences south of Kovel, thereby enabling the lst Panzer Group to emerge into manoeuvring space...

"After certain initial successes the troops of Army Group Centre came upon the enemy substantial forces putting up defence at the prearranged positions, which in some places had even firing points reinforced with concrete. In defending these positions the enemy committed to battle large tank forces and delivered a number of counterattacks on the advancing German troops.

"After fierce battles that lasted several days the Germans succeeded in breaking through the enemy's strong defences west of the Lvov-Rava Russkaya line and in force-crossing the Styr River, as well as pressing eastward the enemy troops which put up tough resistance and repeatedly passed to counterattacks...

"Because of the stiff resistance of the Russians the German troops, during the first days of war, suffered losses in manpower and materiel which were much heavier than the losses sustained in Poland and in the West. It became absolutely evident that the enemy's warfare method and fighting spirit, as well as the country's geographic conditions were absolutely different from those encountered by the Germans in the previous blitzkriegs which led to success amazing the whole world."

An excerpt from the service journal of Colonel-General Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the German Ground Forces

"June 26, 1941 (5th day of war)

Evening summaries of operations for July 25 and morning summaries for July 26 report as follows:

Army Group South is advancing slowly, unfortunately, suffering considerable losses. The enemy acting against the Army Group South is reported to be directed with firmness and vigour. The enemy is constantly moving up fresh forces against our tank wedge. Reserves are pulling up before the central sector of the front, as was observed earlier, and before the southern flank of the group of armies...

**June 29, 1941, (8th day of war)**

Information from the front confirms that the Russians are generally fighting till the last man...

Infantry General Ott reported his impressions about the battle in the Grodno area. Russians' stiff resistance compels us to conduct war in keeping with all the rules of our combat regulations. Both in Poland and the West we could afford certain liberties and deviations from the regulations. Now this is inadmissible. The impact of the enemy's aviation on our troops seems to be very weak...

The evening situation: ...In the Lvov area the enemy is slowly retreating eastward putting up a tough fight for the last line. Here, for the first time, mass destruction of bridges by the enemy can be observed.

**July 4, 1941 (13th day of war)**

In the course of our armies' advance all the enemy's attempts at resistance will, obviously, be broken soon. Then, we shall be confronted with the question of seizing Leningrad and Moscow. It is to be seen how effective will be the statement by Stalin calling upon all the working people to join in the people's war against us. This will determine the measures and forces with which we shall have to mop up the vast industrial regions to be occupied by. us...

**July 7, 1941 (16th day of war).**

... Army Group South. The optimism of the 11th Army command has vanished again. The offensive of the 11th Army is being held up again. The causes are not clear. The 17th Army is successfully moving ahead, concentrating its vanguards for a blow in the direction of Proskurov.

**July 8, 1941 (17th day of war).**

... Army Group Centre. The 2nd Panzer Group is in part

fighting the continuously counterattacking enemy in the direction of the Dnieper. Using its infantry and tanks, the enemy is especially fiercely counterattacking in the Orsha direction against the northern flank of the 2nd Panzer Group. The 3rd Panzer Group, in some places, is force-crossing by its vanguards the Western Daugava, and is striving to break through in the direction of Vitebsk, repulsing the enemy's attacks from the north...

...The enemy is no longer capable of forming a continuous front, even in the key directions. At present, the Red Army Command, apparently, sets itself the task: by committing to battle all its available reserves to wear out the German troops as much as possible by counterattacks, and to check their offensive farther in the west...

The formation by the enemy of new units (on a large scale, in any case) will certainly fail because of the lack of commanding personnel, specialists and artillery materiel.

At 12.30 a report at Führer's at his Headquarters.

First, the Chief Commander of the Ground Forces (Brauchitch — *G. Zh.*) reported on the latest developments at the front. Afterwards I reported on the enemy's situation and gave an operational assessment of the situation of our troops...

In conclusion, there was discussion of questions that were raised.

Results:

1) Führer considers the following the most desirable "ideal solution":

...Army Group Centre is, by a two-side envelopment, to encircle and liquidate the enemy's grouping operating in front of it, and by breaking down the last organized resistance of the enemy at his stretched-out front to open up a path towards Moscow. After both Panzer groups reach the regions indicated by him in the directives on strategic deployment, it will be possible temporarily to keep the Hoth group (to subsequently use it for supporting Army Group North and for a further offensive eastward, and then for encircling, and not attacking Moscow). Guderian's Panzer group after it reaches its place of destination, should be sent in the southern or south-eastern direction, east of the Dnieper, to support the offensive of Army Group South.

2) Führer is firmly determined to level Moscow and Leningrad with the earth, to fully dispose of their population which, otherwise, we shall have to feed during the winter.
**July 11 1941 (20th day of war)**

Army Group North. Heppner's panzer group has been repulsing the enemy's attacks and preparing for a further offensive by the strong right flank into the area south-east of Leningrad...

Colonel Oxner reported on his trip to the panzer groups of Guderian and Goth. The following should be noted:

a) Russian aviation raids on crossing points across the Western Daugava south-west of Vitebsk;

b) The enemy command is acting ably. The enemy is putting up a fierce and fanatic fight;

c) The tank units have suffered substantial losses in manpower and materiel. The troops are tired...

**July 1941.** The scope, strain and heat of fighting is increasing at the huge Soviet-German front with every day."

Halder was compelled to admit that the Soviet troops' resistance, so surprisingly tough, prevented the Nazi Command from attaining the main goal of Plan Barbarossa — to encircle and destroy, in a lightning campaign, the main forces of the Red Army west of the Dnieper line and not allow them to retreat into the country's rear.

On July 26, 1941, Halder wrote: "Report at Fürher's on the operational plans of the groups of armies. From 18:00 to 20:15, lengthy, at times, excited debates, on the lost opportunity of encircling the enemy."

On July 30, Chief of the German General Staff notes in his diary that the High Command issued a new directive on further operations on the Eastern front: "to pass to the defence at the central sector of the front".

Thus, as a result of the Red Army's stubborn resistance signs of uncertainty and nervousness appeared among many of Nazi Germany's military leaders even at the top echelons.

On the 29th day of the war Halder writes: "The fierce nature of the battles being waged by our mobile units operating in separate groups, and the weariness of the troops which, ever since the beginning of the war, have repeatedly been on lengthy

marches and have been waging fierce and bloody battles — all caused despondency in the top echelons. This is especially reflected in the state of depression of the Ground Forces Commander-in-Chief."

Towards the end of July the Nazi army failed to achieve decisive successes. As early as July 18, 1941, Halder wrote: "The operation of Army Group South is getting less and less effective. The sector of the front before Korosten still requires sizable forces to retain it. The arrival of the enemy's large fresh forces in the Kiev area from the north compels us to move up infantry divisions there to ease the situation of the tank units of the 3rd Motorized Corps and later to replace them. As a result, at the northern sector of the front many more forces than desired appear to be contained."

The progress of Army Group North was even less gratifying to Halder.

"There is again extensive alarm over Army Group North which has no main attack force and keeps making mistakes," he writes on July 22. "Indeed, at the front of Army Group North things are not always going smoothly as compared with the other sectors of the Eastern front."

Differences arose at the Wehrmacht top echelon regarding objectives of further operations and directions where the main attacks were to be launched. Inconsistencies were observed in immediate missions assigned to troops. Thus, whereas on July 26 Hitler demanded that the enemy's Gomel group be liquidated through an attack by the newly formed von Kluge group, on July 30, Jodl informed Halder of another decision of the High Command of the Wehrmacht: "There should be no offensive on Gomel for the time being."

This frenzy in actions was a result of unexpectedly stiff resistance by the Red Army.

It can be seen from Halder's diary that the German troops had suffered heavy losses in the first weeks of the fighting on the Soviet-German front. Here are a few examples:

On July 20, 1941, the General Staff of the Ground Forces reported to the top leadership: "The combatant composition of the Panzer units: the 16th Panzer Division has only 40 per cent of the prescribed strength, the 11th Panzer Division — about 40 per cent; the state of the 13th and 14th Panzer Divisions is no

better." There follows a list of other units in approximately the same state.

Here is an exerpt from J.F.C. Fuller's *The Second World War 1939-45* where he quotes revealing passages from the Nazi press:

"Already on 29th June, there appeared an article in *Völkischer Beobachter* pointing out that 'the Russian soldier surpasses our adversary in the West in his contempt for death. Endurance and fatalism make him hold out until he is blown up with his trench or falls in hand-to-hand fighting.'

"On 6th July a somewhat similar article appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in which it stated that the 'mental paralysis which usually follows after the German lightning breakthroughs in the West did not occur to the same extent in the East. In most cases the enemy did not lose his capacity for action, but tried in his turn to envelop the arms of the German pincers.'

"This was something new in the tactics of the war; in fact for the Germans a surprising novelty.

"According to Arvid Fredberg [the author of the article — *Ed.*], 'the German soldier had met an enemy who with fanatical toughness stuck to his political creed and who, against the German blitz attack, put up total resistance'.

"Soon it became apparent that the Russians had not deployed the whole of their armies on the frontier as the Germans expected they would do. And soon it was discovered that they themselves had profoundly misjudged the strength of the Russian reserves. Hitherto the German Intelligence had largely relied on the Fifth Column assistance. In Russia, though there were to be found discontented people, there was no Fifth Column."[1]

Such was the reality encountered by the German Command in the first months of the fighting on the Soviet-German front. Obviously, it was not the reality the Hitlerite leadership had counted on! This thought clearly stands out in the excerpts quoted above. And here are the facts.

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[1] J. F. C. Fuller, *The Second World War 1939-45*, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1948, pp. 120, 122.

In only the first two months of the war in the USSR, the Wehrmacht ground forces lost about 400,000 officers and men. It is to be noted that from June to December 1941, the Nazi invaders lost a mere 9,000 men outside the Soviet-German front. Enemy losses at the end of the summer-autumn campaign comprised slightly less than 800,000 officers and men from the best, crack units.

And all this developed in the extremely unfavourable conditions which emerged for us at the beginning of the war. The enemy had much more combat experience since he had already been fighting for a long period. The initiative was also in his hands. The enemy exceeded us in the number of troops and military equipment in the main directions, since he had been preparing for war for a long time and had rapidly modernized and mechanized the army of aggression for a number of years. The economy and resources for the first blow were also much more powerful, because the enemy had almost the entire military potential of Europe in his hands.

It should also be taken into account that when launching its military machine the Nazi leadership had used up far from all resources it had prepared to seize Europe. Powerful reserves had been released and were all flung against the USSR.

Of course, and we have mentioned this earlier, a severe struggle still lay ahead, we had to repeatedly strain all our forces to repulse the enemy onslaught, capture the initiative, do away with his temporary advantages, and taking the upper hand in all respects to drive him from our country and then help Europe's nations overthrow the fascist yoke.

However, a historic role was played in this great struggle by the heroic resistance the Soviet troops put up against superior enemy forces in the first months of the war, and above all the fierce fighting in the area of Peremyshl, Smolensk, Yelnya and on the distant and immediate approaches to Kiev. In these battles the Hitlerite command failed to realize its plans and calculations concerning the actual course of military events. The main thing was, however, that fascist economy, ideology, propaganda and politics, all its monstrous social system faced problems such as Nazi Germany was unable to solve in the course of the entire war against the Soviet Union...

On September 10, 1941, by decision of the State Defence Committee I was to fly to Leningrad. Before departing I wrote down in my notebook.

"I learned a lot of useful things for command activities of the operational and strategic scale and for understanding different ways of carrying out operations during the organization and successful outcome of the operation to eliminate the Yelnya Salient and the comprehensive and complex work as Chief of the General Staff in the first five weeks of the war.

"Now I have a much better idea of what the commander must master in order to successfully carry out the duties placed upon him. It is my profound conviction that in the struggle the winner is the one who has trained his troops better in the political and moral respect, who has succeeded in explaining the aims of the war and the aims of the coming operation to the troops more clearly and in raising their combat spirit, who strives for military valour, is not afraid of fighting under unfavourable circumstances and who believes in his subordinates.

"Perhaps the most important condition for success in battle or in an operation is to discover timely the weak spots of the enemy troops and command. Interrogations of prisoners showed that the German Command and troops were operating according to a set pattern, without creative initiative, only blindly following orders. That is why as soon as the situation changed, the Germans became confused, acted very passively waiting for orders from the higher commander which could not always be obtained timely in the existing combat situation.

Observing the course of engagement and troop actions personally, I saw that where our troops did not merely resist but at the first opportunity counterattacked the enemy by day and by night, they were almost always successful, particularly at night. The Germans acted with extreme uncertainty at night, I would even say, badly.

"From the practice of the first operations I concluded that those commanders failed most often who did not visit the terrain, where the action was to take place, themselves but only

able to take advantage of weak points in his disposition and direct the main blow there.

"Hastily adopted decisions without a detailed rechecking of the information obtained and due account for the individual qualities of those who report the situation—their military knowledge, experience, endurance and composure— have a particularly negative effect on the course of the operation or battle.

"To achieve victory on any scale it is important to secure cooperation between all arms of the service both in operational elements and in tactical formations on the terrain (or at least on the sand table)..."

## Chapter 13

# THE FIGHTING FOR LENINGRAD

The morning of September 10, 1941, was cool and overcast. At Moscow's Central Airfield, where I had come to board a plane for beleaguered Leningrad, three figures loomed beside the plane on the take-off strip: one tall, that of Lieutenant-General M. S. Khozin; the second a little shorter, that of Major-General I. I. Fedyuninsky, and the third that of the flier who would pilot out aircraft. The two generals, as I had arranged with Stalin, would fly with me.

The pilot reported that his crew and plane were ready for take-off. As most people do in such cases, all of us involuntarily raised our eyes to the sky, trying to guess what the weather would be during our flight. The clouds hung dense and low.

"We'll slip by," the pilot said smiling. "The weather couldn't be better for crossing the enemy lines."

We took off without delay. Leningrad was our destination, and we were already there in our thoughts.

None of us, of course, could have foretold then that the city we were flying to would put up a fight of unexampled heroism, resisting the enemy and hunger for 900 days and nights.

Leningrad is the cradle of the proletarian revolution. It evokes warm feelings in the hearts of all Soviet people. Here Lenin had led our Party, laying the foundation of the world's first socialist state. From the first days of Soviet government, the city had played an exceedingly important part in our country's political, economic, and cultural development.

Leningrad is a city of untold beauty. Its architectural masterpieces, the paintings and sculptures collected there, the magnificent monuments, the alluring gardens, parks and museums, are the pride of our country.

The Nazi Command attached exceptional importance to capturing this large industrial centre and seaport. Its seizure would have given Nazi Germany a number of political, economic, and moral advantages.

From the political and strategic point of view, capturing Leningrad and making direct contact with the Finnish troops would tighten the fascist coalition and prompt the governments of certain other, still hesitant, countries to go to war against the Soviet Union.

Swift seizure of Leningrad would have released additional German troops, notably the panzer and motorized formations of the 4th Panzer Group, for Operation Typhoon (code name of the Nazi attempt to capture Moscow).

On the moral and psychological plane, the fall of Leningrad would have lifted the morale of the Nazi armies, the troops of satellite countries, the population in Germany, and the people in other Axis countries, bolstering their faith in the realism of Hitler's war plans against the Soviet Union. For his *blitzkrieg* had shown signs of foundering, gumming up the works for the German Command. The excessively large losses on the Eastern front had already given rise to serious doubts as to a swift German victory in the war.

The loss of Leningrad would have gravely complicated our strategic situation in all respects. If the city were to fall to the enemy and the German and Finnish troops were to join up, we would have to build a new front to defend Moscow from the north, and that would mean committing our strategic reserves which the Stavka intended to defend the capital at its immediate approaches. Besides, we would then inescapably lose our strong Baltic Fleet.

For the enemy, the capture of Leningrad meant that Army Group North and the Finnish troops operating on the Karelian Isthmus would join with the Finnish and German troops active in the region of the Svir river. Our communications with Karelia and Murmansk would be cut. Cumulatively, this made the fighting for Leningrad extremely tense and bitter.

The Hitler Command had [illegible] d a larg[illegible] troops, Army Group North under F[illegible] l von [illegible] ture he Baltic republics and [illegible] in [illegible] ust

1941 von Leeb had managed to capture a substantial portion of the country round Leningrad.

Upon capturing Schlüsselburg on September 8, 1941, the enemy cut the last of our overland communication lines. Leningrad was blockaded. Our line of defence had come to rest along the western bank of the Neva. That broad and deep river was a serious obstacle for the Nazis. But it had to be defended, because crack German units had taken Schlüsselburg and thus emerged on the shore of Lake Ladoga.

Previously the enemy had pried away our 54th Army from the rest of the Leningrad Front forces. But the 54th barred the Nazis from advancing further east, and halted them along the Lipki-Rabochy Posyolok No. 8-Gaitolovo line. From that time on, however, it was no longer subordinate to the Leningrad Front, and took orders directly from the Supreme Command.

The Leningrad Front's 8th Army, which had earlier fought in Estonia, rolled back after heavy fighting and entrenched itself along a line running from Peterhof south of Ust-Ruditsa to the Gulf of Finland in the vicinity of Kernovo. The Army's overland communications with Leningrad were now cut; it maintained contact with the city by sea and air only.

On the Karelian Isthmus, Finnish troops had emerged on the old national border and tried to advance further, but were halted. Now they were waiting for a favourable chance to lunge at Leningrad from the north.

As of September 8, Leningrad's position became exceedingly precarious. Its communications with the rest of the country now ran across Lake Ladoga only, or by air under cover of fighter planes. The Nazis had begun bombing and shelling the city. The attacks were merciless and barbaric. The enemy was battering away at the city from all sides. A large mass of panzer and motorized troops had crashed through to the approaches of Uritsk, the Pulkovo Heights and Slutsk. There was every evidence that the enemy was taking up positions for a final assault.

The situation grew tenser each day.

...From Moscow to Lake Ladoga our plane was favoured by "suitable" weather. Enemy fighters, thwarted by the rain and low clouds, stayed on the ground, and we got along beautifully without an escort. But as we came to Lake Ladoga the weather

improved, and we had to summon a flight of fighters. We flew low over the water, pursued by two Messerschmitts. After a short while, we landed safely on the city's army airfield, but since we were in a hurry to get to Smolny, where the Headquarters of the Front was located, there was no time to find out why our air cover had not driven off the enemy planes.

At the gates to the Smolny we were stopped by the guard, which ordered us to show our passes. None of us had any, of course, and I identified myself. But that did not help. Orders are orders in the army and no one was to pass without authority.

"You'll have to wait a little, Comrade General", the guard said to me and called for the duty officer. We had to wait for nearly 15 minutes until the commandant issued a personal permit for us.

At the entrance to the Smolny we were met by an aide of the Front Commander.

"Where is Comrade Voroshilov?" I asked.

The aide said he was presiding at a conference of the Front's Military Council attended by some of the commanders of armies and chiefs of arms of the service, as well as the Commander of the Baltic Fleet and directors of important city enterprises.

We went up a flight of stairs to the Front Commander's room, and on entering it saw about a dozen people seated round a red-cloth-covered table. I asked Voroshilov and Zhdanov for permission to attend, and a short while later handed Voroshilov a note from Stalin. Not without trepidation, I must confess. The Marshal read the note in silence, nodded his head, gave the note to Zhdanov, and got on with the conference.

The Front's Military Council was discussing what to do if the city could no longer be held. People made curt, dry statements. The key military and industrial targets, and so on, were to be destroyed. Today, more than 30 years later, all this sounds incredible, but at that time the situation was critical, though a few reserves were still untapped. Discussion ended with a unanimous expression of resolve to defend Leningrad to the last drop of blood.

At that moment, probably, everyone attending the conference felt most acutely the full burden of his responsibility to the Party and the people. All of us were determined to fulfil the

mission set us by the Politbureau of the Party's Central Committee and the State Defence Committee.

I was greatly pleased to discover that I knew many of the commanders, Party and political workers, and Baltic Fleet officers. I had a good idea of what I could expect from each of them and what jobs each could be trusted with. And it was a special pleasure to know that the Party's Central Committee Secretary Andrei Zhdanov, a magnificent organizer and a charming and warm-hearted man who was revered by Leningraders and the troops, stood at the head of the Leningrad Party organization and was a member of the Front's Military Council.

Towards nightfall on September 10, by authority of the Supreme Commander's note and without posting the official order, I took command of the Leningrad Front.[1]

Until the morning hours of September 11, we discussed the situation and what additional measures could be taken to protect Leningrad. Taking part in the discussion were Zhdanov, Voroshilov, Admiral Isakov, the Front's Chief of Staff, and the chiefs of some arms of the service.

I knew the city and its environs because I had studied there some years before at cavalry commanders' improvement courses. Much had changed since then, of course, but I still had a good idea of the battle zone.

On the day of our arrival the situation became tenser still. The Nazi attacks on points defended by the 42nd Army were especially ferocious. Enemy panzers broke through into Uritsk, but our anti-tank artillery made them turn back. With panzer, air and artillery support, and despite heavy losses, the German infantry was persistently attacking the Pulkovo Heights and the towns of Pushkin and Kolpino. In the ferocious fighting, the 42nd Army commander used up all his reserves.

The badly depleted 55th Army under General I. G. Lazarev was manning the south-eastern approaches to Leningrad. Quite obviously, it lacked the requisite strength. At Kolpino, the

[1] The Stavka order appointing me Commander of the Leningrad Front was signed on September 11, 1941, after I reported to Stalin that I had arrived in Leningrad. Paragraph 3 of the order read: "Comrade Voroshilov is to hand over, and Comrade Zhukov is to take up, command of the Leningrad Front within 24 hours of his arrival in Leningrad..."— *Author.*

battle lines ran close to the Izhorsky Plant which was filling an important military order. Responding to the appeal of the plant's Party branch, its Communists and Komsomols took up arms and formed a workers' battalion. The Nazi attempts to crash into the city at this point were flung back. The Izhorsky Plant people stood their ground unto death.

I learned of the acute shortage of anti-tank guns all along the front. We decided to make up for it by using anti-aircraft guns that could pierce armour. Some of the anti-aircraft guns were immediately removed from the city squares and streets and stationed at the most dangerous points.

*The Front's Military Council ordered the construction* of a deeply echeloned and ramified defence line at the most vulnerable sectors. It had all the approaches to the city densely mined, and some of the obstacles charged with electricity.

The area round the Pulkovo Heights called for special attention. The first thing to do was to buttress the Pulkovo-Uritsk line of defence. Part of the 23rd Army, stationed on the Karelian Isthmus where the Finns had been halted, was rushed in to assist the 42nd Army. In addition to Front artillery, Baltic Fleet ordnance also concentrated its fire on this sector.

We also planned to form five or six separate rifle brigades of Baltic Fleet seamen and Leningrad students. They were to be activated in five or six days.

*Fulfilment of all these measures was to begin in the* morning of September 11, which had already dawned.

In addition to Zhdanov, Kuznetsov and me, the Military Council included T. F. Shtykov, Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Party Committee, N. V. Solovyov, Chairman of the Regional Executive Committee, and P. E. Popkov, Chairman of the City Executive Committee. We laboured through the night with vigour and imagination, as a close-knit team. None of the enumerated comrades, I am sorry to say, is alive. But I want everyone to know that they were fine men — dedicated Party men and statesmen. They did everything that could be done to defend Leningrad, which was in mortal danger. Leningraders knew them well and respected them for their stout courage and willpower.

The people of the city, each at his or her post, did their duty with courage beyond compare. The main task was to

supply the troops with arms, ammunition and other military equipment. They were manufactured under continuous enemy shelling and ceaseless air raids.

The Kirov Plant, which made the heavy KV tanks (plant director I. M. Zaltsman), was turned into a major centre of defence. Many of its workers had joined the *opolcheniye*, the people's volunteer army. Their places were taken by boys and girls, women, and old men. The bulk of the work force took up lodgings in the plant's office building and other factory premises. People did not leave the plant grounds for days on end. The windows of shops facing the front had to be shuttered with armour plating and sandbags owing to the proximity of the battle lines. Production did not stop during air raids and shellings. The off duty shift put out fires caused by incendiary bombs, and the medical staff treated the wounded.

The Nazis had a painstakingly drawn up scheme for shelling and bombing the key targets — factories, educational establishments, railway stations, hospitals, and shopping centres. Streets with the liveliest traffic were favourite Nazi targets.

Prisoner of war Lowno Rudolf of the 240th Artillery Regiment, 170th Infantry Division, testified later that Leningrad was shelled in the morning from 8 to 9, then from 11 to 12, in the afternoon from 5 to 6, and in the evening from 8 to 10, and that the shelling was meant to kill the city's inhabitants, to destroy factories and other vital buildings, and to affect the Leningraders' morale.[1]

The Nazis stuck at nothing. In the Schlüsselburg area, where the 1st Rifle Division of NKVD troops under Colonel S. I. Donskov was holding the line, enemy units attempted to cross the Neva at the Porosh-Nevskaya Dubrovka-Moskovskaya Dubrovka sector. On orders of the Nazi Command, Soviet women, children and old men herded in from nearby villages were made to march in front of the German troops. To avoid hitting their countrymen, our gunners had to display a high degree of accuracy.

The enemy was straining every muscle to capture the city. At dawn on September 11 the Nazis renewed their offensive, Ger-

[1] *The Nuremberg Trial of German War Criminals*, in 7 volumes, Vol. 1, Yuridicheskaya Literatura Publishers, Moscow, 1957, p. 594 (in Russian).

man shock troops mounting massive assaults against our lines. And towards the end of the day they managed to take Duderhof.

The following day, we were compelled to abandon Krasnoye Selo under pressure of superior forces. Our troops defending the towns of Pushkin and Slutsk were in desperate straits, too.

General Halder, Chief of General Staff of Nazi Germany's Ground Forces, put the following down in his diary:

"The offensive on Leningrad of the 41st Motorized and 38th Army Corps is developing quite satisfactorily. A great achievement!"

Fierce and costly battles continued for nearly a week. Halder made this other entry in his diary:

"In the sector of Army Group North considerable successes are recorded in the offensive on Leningrad. The enemy has begun to weaken in the zone of Reinhardt's [41st Motorized — *G.Zh.*] corps."

Energetic and resolute action was called for. It was essential that we should use the least opportunity to counterattack day or night, fatiguing the enemy, inflicting losses in men and arms, and frustrating his offensive actions. The strictest order and discipline had to be maintained. Troop control had to be tightened. On September 11, General Khozin was appointed Chief of Staff of the Leningrad Front, and on September 14, the Front's Military Council appointed Fedyuninsky Commander of the 42nd Army.

The 168th Rifle Division under Colonel A. L. Bondarev had distinguished itself in the fighting for the towns of Pushkin and Slutsk. This regular division had fought heroically on the Finnish border and in the Karelian forests north-west of Lake Ladoga for 45 days. On orders of the command, fighting rearguard battles in most difficult conditions, the division withdrew to Valaam Island, whence it was transferred to the Leningrad area. Its men had managed to keep nearly all their equipment intact, including the howitzers and guns of its artillery regiments. Reinforced by Leningrad Communists, the division came to grips with the enemy at Novolisino, Slutsk and the town of Pushkin, and fought just as tenaciously as it had on the Finnish border. The fighting around Kolpino was especially ferocious.

We were working to stabilize the situation at Leningrad in a most complicated situation. The enemy kept increasing pressure, especially in the sector held by the 42nd Army at Pulkovo. The other sectors, at Schlüsselburg and Oranienbaum, also required close attention. Though there the attacks were secondary, we could not leave them without notice because a Nazi advance would entail serious complications.

With deep gratitude, I want to mention the intelligent organizational role of Colonel-General A. A. Novikov, commander of Leningrad's Air Force, who used the Front's and navy aircraft most effectively to help drive back the raging enemy.

Admiral Isakov was my deputy for naval affairs. I am deeply convinced that he was one of the most intelligent and gifted Soviet naval leaders. Under his guidance, the Baltic Fleet activated six separate marine brigades and turned them over to the Leningrad Front. Together with General V. P. Sviridov, Chief of the Front's artillery, he lost no time to pool Front and navy resources, launching a powerful long-range counter-artillery group.

Hitler called on Field Marshal von Leeb to get on with capturing Leningrad. He wanted the mobile units of the 4th Panzer Group to be released for use with Army Group Centre in the Moscow sector.

In the early morning of September 13, two infantry, one panzer, and one motorized enemy divisions mounted an offensive in the general direction of Uritsk. They crashed through our defences, captured Konstantinovka, Sosnovka, and Finskoye Koirovo, and rolled on towards Uritsk.

"A considerable development of the wedge from the west towards Leningrad," Halder put down jubilantly in his diary that day, and added in the evening: "Considerable successes at Leningrad. The emergence of our troops at the 'internal fortified perimeter' may be considered complete."

A desperate situation had arisen. To eliminate the danger, the Front's Military Council decided to commit our last reserve, the 10th Rifle Division. This was a tremendous risk, but we had no other choice.

In the morning of September 14, after a brief but powerful preparatory artillery bombardment, the 10th Rifle Division and units of neighbouring formations, with air support, struck

a swift blow at the enemy. Our original defence line was restored. Suffering heavy losses, the enemy withdrew from Sosnovka and Finskoye Koirovo.

We did our best, above all, to determine the enemy's potential strength, to grasp the designs of the Nazi Command, to find out the strong and weak points of the German troops blockading the city. We had to decide what forces and resources to commit against the enemy, and what mode of action to adopt in order to thwart his intention of capturing Leningrad.

Reflecting on how best to defend Leningrad, our attention was drawn to the fact that, when attacking, the enemy sent troops into battle on a broad front, in three groups, and that the main force — panzers and infantry — came from the south. Von Leeb was evidently convinced that this was where he would succeed in breaking into the city. But owing to the many houses crowded in the suburbs and to the mass of forests, he advanced along the roads. This, we felt, was something we could profit from: we were quite able to cover all roads with artillery and mortar fire, to hit them from the air, to put up man-made obstacles.

Past experience had shown that the enemy was highly sensitive to all activity on our part. Counter-offensives and counterattacks slowed him down. Instead of massing all shock troops in the main sector, he often confined himself to half-measures. This enabled us to win time — the time we needed to organize an effective counter-manoeuvre.

The disposition of our troops made our defensive actions effectively dynamic. The 8th Army was digging in at Oranienbaum. Given due support by the navy and the 42nd Army it could hit the enemy's western flank and rear, thus pinning down a considerable force that would otherwise have thrust towards the city.

Much could also be expected of the 54th Army under Marshal G. I. Kulik. Stationed on the eastern flank of the narrow Schlüsselburg-Mga corridor, it could mount an attack on enemy formations and thereby ease the situation of the *Leningrad Front* by drawing off part of Army Group North from the main Pulkovo sector.

It was clear that success depended on how actively our ps would operate in the main sectors. We had realized

this the moment we arrived in Leningrad, and reported accordingly to the Supreme Command.

Our additional measures to buttress the city's defences provided for the following:

— Party-political work with the troops and population should be improved in order to tighten discipline and instil faith in victory;

— all land, air and naval strength should continue inflicting the maximum losses on enemy shock troops by all available means and thus prevent them from breaching our defences;

— another five rifle brigades and two rifle divisions should be activated and fully armed by September 18; the bulk should be placed at the disposal of the 42nd Army to form its fourth line of defence;

— the 8th Army should continue to hit the enemy in the flank and rear in order to draw enemy forces away from Leningrad;

— units of the Front should coordinate their actions with those of the 54th Army in a bid to clear the Mga-Schlüsselburg area of the enemy;

— more effective missions should be assigned to underground Party organizations and partisan detachments operating south of Leningrad.

Two important factors were thus provided for: instilling unshakeable confidence in our victory among the troops and inhabitants, and marshalling reserves to increase the depth of our defences. A sudden strike by the 8th Army was expected to yield immediate results. Special attention was also focussed on the 42nd Army, for it was manning the most dangerous sector. We were planning to build up defences there and thwart possible enemy attempts at seizing the city in a head-on attack. Much depended on the navy and the coast artillery, which became more and more relevant as the battlefield moved closer to the seashore.

Later events showed that our plan was effective. A general idea of the situation in and around Leningrad and of the measures we were taking to organize defences, may be obtained from my telegraphic conversation with Shaposhnikov on September 14, 1941.

15—1067

Shaposhnikov. Greetings, Georgi Konstantinovich. Please, report on the situation and tell me what measures you are taking.

Zhukov. Greetings, Boris Mikhailovich. The situation in the southern sector is much more complicated than the General Staff had thought. This evening, developing the breach made by three or four of his infantry divisions, the enemy committed up to two panzer divisions and reached the line of Novy Suzi (two kilometres south of Pulkovo)-Finskoye Koirovo (its northern outskirt)-Konstantinovka-Gorelovo-Anino-Koporskoye-Ropsha-Glyadino, and is building up the offensive in a northerly direction... Krasnogvardeisk and the roads from Krasnogvardeisk to Pulkovo are also held by the enemy.

The situation in this sector is therefore extremely serious. What makes matters worse is the absence of any reserves in the Leningrad area. We are resisting the enemy's offensive with whatever we can marshal — odd detachments, separate regiments, and newly activated workers' *opolcheniye* divisions.

Shaposhnikov. What measures have been taken?

Zhukov. This evening we organized a system of artillery fire, including naval, anti-aircraft, and other artillery, to shell the roads used by the enemy. We're taking stock of our mortars, and I think that by morning we'll manage to put up a dense barrage in the main sectors to back up our infantry along the line I have named. We are marshalling all aircraft of the Leningrad Front and the Baltic Fleet, and also something like a hundred tanks.

In the southern outskirts of Leningrad, we are deploying the NKVD division along the Myasokombinat-Rybatskoye-Morskoi Port line; so far, we have reinforced it with 100 guns, and plan to give it at least another 100. That is all I can say so far about the situation in and around Leningrad.

We are organizing a strike in the 8th Army sector to straddle the Kingisepp Highway and draw off part of the Nazi force from Leningrad with an attack against the enemy flank and rear. Then, cooperating with the 55th and 42nd armies, we will eliminate the enemy in Krasnoye Selo. The 55th and 42nd armies, we expect, will not go on the offensive until September 17. No earlier date is possible because there is not strength enough. I hope to marshal strength by getting the Astanin

group out.[1] I hope to marshal some five divisions — that is, if we manage to get Astanin out of the encirclement in the next couple of days. If not, we'll have at least three divisions.

I'll prepare a strike in cooperation with Kulik, but we'll not be able to mount it until we eliminate the enemy in Krasnoye Selo...

Altogether, I have 268 aircraft on the Leningrad Front, out of which only 163 are in working order. We are badly short of bombers and attack planes. All we have is six PE-2s, two IL-2s, two AR-12s, and eleven SBs. This is too little to accomplish what we have in mind. I appeal to the Stavka for at least one regiment of PE-2s and another of IL-2s.

Shaposhnikov. I think your plan of first organizing an artillery barrage is absolutely correct. The Leningrad Front has enough guns to put up such a barrage.

Zhukov. Splendid. Please bear in mind, however, that, as I have already said, the Krasnogvardeisk area up to the Izhora river, and all roads leading through Krasnogvardeisk to the north, are held by the enemy... I am having to take urgent measures to restore due order in the units... I think, we'll have order within the next few days... If we have to, we'll not stick at anything.

Please let Kulik have two or three more divisions, so he'll deliver a powerful blow. That will be the best possible help to our Front in the prevailing situation. I am keeping in touch with Kulik by Baudot telegraph.

Shaposhnikov. I take it that Krasnogvardeisk is blocking the road north, though the enemy bypassed it in the west... Now, of course, all attention should be centred on eliminating the Krasnoye Selo breach, and then on cooperation with Kulik... I think that you will still find people and arms in your own backyard and in various higher educational establishments. The Stavka wants you to brief us on events at the front more often — both by wire and by radio. I will pass on your request for bombers to Comrade Stalin immediately. End of conversation.

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[1] Major-General A. N. Astanin was in command of the Luga operational group. At the end of August 1941 his troops were encircled by the enemy in the vicinity of Siverskaya-Mshinkaya and Novinka railway stations.— *Author.*

We had to pick the sector where to break the blockade. As we saw it, the enemy's Mga salient was the most suitable place. To begin with, it was no more than 15 to 20 kilometres wide. The terrain was wooded and swampy, with many large peatbogs. Small heights commanded a good view of the surrounding plain and could be splendidly adapted for strong and effective defence. So that was where our eyes were turned for the most favourable place to break the blockade.

Soon after my arrival in Leningrad, Shaposhnikov let me know that the Stavka was trying to relieve besieged Leningrad by having the 54th Army strike from the east. He asked me to assign troops for meeting attacks. Regrettably, the Front had no troops to spare. Everything we had was concentrated in the main sector, and to borrow units from there was tantamount to surrendering the city. That is why we decided to assign just one division and a brigade of the Neva operational group to strike out in the direction of the 54th Army.

They would have to force-cross the deep Neva at Nevskaya Dubrovka where the river was some 800 metres wide under incessant enemy fire, and thereupon attack the Nazis across swamps and woods. The mission was exceedingly difficult and, one might add, beyond their strength.

If Leningrad was to be relieved in September 1941, the 54th Army would have to operate more energetically and in complete cooperation with units of the Leningrad Front. Yet we failed to settle the issue of joint action as required in the circumstances. I take the liberty to cite a conversation I had over the wire with Marshal Kulik in the early morning hours of September 15, 1941. The text is slightly abridged.

Zhukov: Greetings, Grigory Ivanovich. Are you apprized of my having come to replace Voroshilov? I would like you and me to get down to clearing the territory more quickly, shaking each other's hand and organizing the rear of the Leningrad Front. Please tell me briefly what the situation is in your sector. For my part, I want to inform you of what is going on around Leningrad.

F i r s t, the enemy has seized Krasnoye Selo and is mounting one fierce attack after another on Pulkovo in the direction of Ligovo. The other seat of trouble is south-east of Slutsk in the vicinity of Fedorovskoye. Here eight enemy regiments

are advancing in the general direction of the town of Pushkin with the objective of joining up with the force operating against Pulkovo.

S e c o n d, the situation on the other sectors is the same as before... Astanin's southern group of four divisions is taking steps to break out of the encirclement.

T h i r d, we are organizing actions in all sectors of the front. Much hope is being pinned on you. That is all I have to say so far. Please tell me briefly what the situation is in your sector.

Kulik: More power to you, Georgi Konstantinovich. I am pleased that the two of us have the same proud mission of relieving Leningrad. I, too, look, forward to the moment when we'll shake hands. Here's the situation in my sector:

F i r s t, during the past two or three days there has been fighting on my left flank in the vicinity of Voronovo, that is, on the left flank of the troops which are going to join up with you. In the past two or three days, the enemy has concentrated the following divisions against my main forces. I'll name the regiments, because I'd like to know if the other regiments of these divisions are on your Front. I begin with those on the right-hand side — in the vicinity of Rabochy Posyolok No.1 we have spotted the 424th Regiment of the 126th Infantry Division, which we have not seen before in my sector. The other regiments of this division are not here. They are either in Schlusselburg or along the Neva operating westward against you, or in the reserve near Schlüsselburg.

S e c o n d, the 20th Motorized Division is active around Siniavino and to the south of it; here we have also spotted vehicles of the 12th Panzer Division.

T h i r d, the 21st Infantry Division has taken up positions in the Sigolovo-Turyshkino area. It is operating jointly with the 5th Panzer Division, thrusting towards Slavyanka-Voronovo. In the past three days, motorized and panzer units were being intensively transferred from the Lyuban area to Shapki-Turyshkino-Sologubovka. Today at 16:30 hours we have spotted more than 50 panzers advancing towards Sigolovo in the Sologubovka area. Besides, there is a large concentration of troops in the woods east of Sigolovo and north-east of

Turyshkino. They've brought in heavy artillery to this area. Today we have been fighting for the possession of Voronovo. This was a back-up operation for the coming offensive, but our attacks failed. True, I intentionally engaged unimportant units in the operation, because I did not want large forces to become involved in it, for at present the units of my army are being replenished.

The front line held by the 54th Army is Lipka-Rabochy Posyolok No. 8-Rabochy Posyolok No.7-Posyolok Estonsky-Tortolovo-Myshkino-Porechye-Mikhalevo.

The enemy is massing a fairly strong group on my right flank... I expect him to mount an attack tomorrow. I have taken due measures to repulse it, and to go over at once to a counter-offensive. In the past three or four days we have destroyed at least 70 panzers... A fierce engagement was fought in the afternoon of September 13 in the vicinity of Gornoye Khandrovo, where we destroyed 28 panzers and a battalion of infantry. Still, the enemy is constantly active, especially today. That is all.

It followed from what Kulik said that his army was not going on the offensive in the immediate future. This was distressing, because the situation in and around Leningrad was becoming critical. Apart from direct action by the 54th Army, I had also been counting on its air arm hitting important targets at the approaches to Leningrad.

This I intended to bring home to Kulik.

Zhukov: Thanks for the information, Grigory Ivanovich. I have a most insistent request: don't wait for the enemy to attack; organize a preliminary shelling at once, and take the offensive yourself in the general direction of Mga.

Kulik: Certainly. I am thinking of the 16th or 17th.

Zhukov: The 16th or 17th will be too late. We are dealing with a highly mobile enemy, and must jump on him first. I'm sure that if you mount an offensive, you'll have good results. But if you don't begin tomorrow, please use all your aircraft to crush the enemy in the Poddolovo-Kordelevo-Chernaya Rechka-Annolovo area. All these points are on the Izhora river four or five kilometres south-east of Slutsk. Raid the

area all through the day, if only with a small number of planes, just to keep the enemy from raising his head. But that is an extreme measure. I beg you to attack, and to send the cavalry into the enemy's rear. That's all.

Kulik: I cannot mount the offensive tomorrow because the artillery hasn't yet arrived, and we haven't practised joint action. Besides, not all units have come to the starting positions. I have just been informed that at 23:00 hours the enemy mounted an attack in the Schlüsselburg-Lipka-Siniavino-Gontovaya Lipka area. The attack has been repulsed. If the Nazis don't launch a general offensive tomorrow, I'll have my airforce do what you asked...

I knew all about the situation in and around Schlüsselburg. Marshal Kulik was wrong: the enemy's action was nothing more than an attempt to test our defences in force. Kulik obviously did not, or did not want to, understand the desperately tense situation in Leningrad.

I did not hide my annoyance any longer, and said:

"The enemy did not mount an attack; he was merely reconnoitring in force. Unfortunately, some people mistake reconnaissance and skirmishes for an offensive...

"It is clear to me that you are above all worried about the welfare of the 54th Army, and, evidently, insufficiently worried about the situation in Leningrad. I want you to know that I am having to send people from the factories to meet the attacking enemy, and have no time to practise joint action on site. I have understood that I cannot count on any active manoeuvre by your Army. I will rely on myself only. Let me add that I am astonished at the lack of cooperation between your group and the Front. It seems to me that Suvorov, if he were in your place, would have acted differently. Pardon me for speaking my mind, but I have no time for diplomacy. Best wishes..."

Despite all our measures, the situation in and around Leningrad continued to deteriorate. The enemy was becoming increasingly active. Field-Marshal von Leeb was evidently doing his utmost to carry out Hitler's order and complete the Leningrad operation at any cost before the Germans launched their offensive on Moscow.

In the morning of September 15, the enemy renewed his

attacks in the sector of the 42nd Army. Four Nazi divisions backed by panzers and massive air strikes, were moving forward doggedly. At the price of considerable losses, they managed to push back our 10th and 11th Rifle divisions to the southern edge of. Volodarsky and Uritsk. At other points, the 42nd managed to hold its ground.

To prevent an enemy breakthrough to Leningrad at Uritsk, we reinforced the 42nd Army with the newly-formed 21st Rifle Division of the NKVD, the 6th *opolcheniye* division of people's volunteers, and two rifle brigades consisting of seamen and the city's air defence personnel. These troops were ordered to man the outer perimeter of the city's fortified zone running from the Gulf of Finland through Ligovo, Myasokombinat and Rybatskoye to the Neva river.

As a result, the 42nd Army had a strong second echelon and its defences acquired tactical depth. This made the Army's position much more dependable.

By emerging on the outskirts of Volodarsky and Uritsk, the enemy had overextended his left flank even more, and we decided to take advantage of this and let our 8th Army counterattack.

The commander of the 8th Army was ordered to leave cover troops in the Kernovo-Terentyevo sector, to withdraw the 5th Marine Brigade to fortifications prepared earlier along the Kovashi river, and to concentrate the 191st and 281st Rifle divisions and the 2nd *opolcheniye* division on the left flank, hitting the enemy in the Lipitsy-Volodarsky area in the direction of Krasnoye Selo. The 10th and 11th Rifle divisions and the 3rd *opolcheniye* division of the 42nd Army, which were to participate in the counterattack, were turned over to the 8th Army, while its 125th and 268th Rifle divisions were pulled back as the Front's reserve.

We thus formed an 8th Army task force to hit the enemy and, at the same time, restored the Front reserve to parry any surprises. The developments proved that this was timely and correct.

When reporting my decision to the Supreme Command, I did not hold back the contents of my conversation with Kulik. Stalin promised to speak to him. He did so in the evening of September 16, and demanded that he "should not delay

preparations for an offensive, but was to mount it resolutely and secure communications with Zhukov".

"In his conversation with you on September 15," Stalin reminded Kulik, "Zhukov described the situation of the Leningrad Front to you, and that is why your operation must not be delayed."

All the same, the offensive of the 54th Army did not begin until several days later.

On September 17, the fighting at the approaches to Leningrad attained its crescendo. On that day, six enemy divisions strongly supported by the air force of Army Group North mounted a new attempt to break through to Leningrad from the south. The city's defenders fought stoutly for literally every metre of soil, and continuously counterattacked. The artillery of the Leningrad Front and the guns of the Baltic Fleet rained shells upon the advancing enemy, while army and navy aircraft rendered all possible support to our ground forces.

The Military Council of our Front assessed the situation as exceedingly dangerous, and issued a strict order to the military councils of the 42nd and 55th armies, which read: "The Ligovo-Kiskino-Verkhneye Koirovo-Pulkovo Heights-Moskovskaya Slavyanka-Shushary and Kolpino line is of exceptional importance for Leningrad's defence, and may not be abandoned under any circumstances".

And credit is due to our heroic fighting men: they appreciated the meaning of the order and obeyed it to the letter. Our troops put up a powerful artillery barrage, counterattacked continuously, and compelled the Nazis to go on the defensive. The 21st Rifle Division under Colonel I. D. Panchenko, the 6th Marine Brigade under Colonel D. A. Sinochkin, and the 7th Air Fighter Corps under Colonel N. D. Antonov distinguished themselves in repulsing an enemy strike through Ligovo at Leningrad. The gunners of the 42nd Army displayed courage beyond compare. Time and again, entire artillery battalions, sometimes even regiments, took up combat positions in the open and fired on the attacking enemy at point-blank range, wreaking destruction. In just the Ligovo-Pulkovo sector, more than 500 artillery pieces were thus positioned for direct laying.

The 8th Army's counterattack played an exceedingly important part in frustrating the enemy's plan of breaking into Leningrad through Uritsk. Its shock force of four rifle divisions mounted an offensive in the general direction of Krasnoye Selo in the morning of September 19. Though the attack failed to restore our defence line here, it compelled the Germans to take part of the forces from the most dangerous Uritsk-Leningrad sector and move them to the Peterhof sector, as we had wanted them to do.

While continuing his ferocious attacks on the Pulkovo Heights, the enemy also looked for weak spots in our defences in other sectors. In the morning of September 18, he struck at the junction between the 42nd and 55th armies and, on seizing the town of Pushkin, tried to envelop the Pulkovo Heights from the left and Kolpino from the right, and thereby break through to Leningrad. But here, too, the Nazi troops failed to squash the resistance of the undermanned but heroic Soviet troops.

At the height of the fighting for Pulkovo and Pushkino, the enemy delivered one of the most powerful artillery and air blows on Leningrad, trying thereby to break the will of the Leningraders and of the city's defenders. On September 19, the shelling of the city lasted without interruption for 18 hours — from 01:05 hours to 19.00 hours. During this period, the German air force mounted six large raids on the city, with as many as 276 bombers breaking through to Leningrad.

To suppress or destroy our powerful naval artillery, which was bombarding the advancing troops of Army Group North with annihilating effect, the Nazis mounted a series of massive raids on our warships and on Kronstadt on September 21, 22, and 23. Several hundred bombers at once took part in these raids. But the intensive anti-aircraft fire and resolute attacks by Soviet fighter planes frustrated the enemy's designs: no substantial damage was done to the Baltic Fleet.

Between September 23 and 26, inclusive, the enemy made repeated attempts to seize the Pulkovo Heights, Peterhof, and Oranienbaum. But strong artillery, mortar, machine-gun and rifle fire, as well as air strikes, repulsed the enemy attacks.

At the same time, our infantry struck the enemy painfully again and again.

To buttress defences in the area of Uritsk and the Pulkovo Heights, we summoned the reserves of the 23rd Army stationed on the Karelian Isthmus. The situation there was calmer. There was some sporadic firing by the Finns, with our troops responding in the same coin. This enabled us to take the Army's reserves, and even a few regiments of some of the rifle divisions.

A landing party of marines was sent into the enemy rear in the Peterhof area to help out the maritime army group. The seamen were not simply brave, but also fearlessly bold. Though the enemy had somehow spotted them and opened fire while they were still seaborne, they did not flinch. As they scrambled ashore, the Germans turned tail. By that time they had a more than healthy respect for our marines, whom they called *der schwarze Tod* (Black Death).

Carried away by their initial success, the marines pursued the fleeing enemy, but at dawn were themselves cut off from the sea. They fought gallantly, and most of them laid down their lives. Their commander, Colonel Andrei Vorozhilov, did not return from the raid either.

Commandos of seamen and border guards of the 20th NKVD Division under Colonel A. P. Ivanov, were sent behind enemy lines time and again. And everywhere they fought with prowess and valour. The rifle brigades formed of Baltic Fleet seamen distinguished themselves, too, in the September fighting.

On September 20, the Supreme Command again called on Marshal Kulik, Commander of the 54th Army, to expedite his offensive. In his telegram to Kulik, Stalin insisted on immediate action.

"In these two days, the 21st and the 22nd," the Supreme Commander said in a telegram, "a breach must be knocked into the enemy front; your troops must join the Leningraders. You have delayed long enough. Now you must make up for lost time. If you do not, the Germans will turn every village into a fortress and you will never be able to join the Leningraders".

But these instructions, too, were not carried out.

So, on September 29, Marshal Kulik was relieved of his

command, and the Stavka placed the 54th Army under the Leningrad Front. General Khozin was put in charge of the 54th without relieving him of his duties as the Front's Chief of Staff.

As we later learned, the Hitlerites, too, were urging von Leeb to hurry. Army Group North was told to lose no more time and crush the resistance of Leningrad's defenders in order to join hands with the Finnish troops in Karelia. Despite all of von Leeb's measures, however, his blandishments and exhortations, even threats, the Nazi troops failed in their undertaking. Thanks to highly active and dogged defence, and the mass heroism displayed by our officers and men, the Nazi breakthrough to Leningrad by way of Krasnoye Selo-Uritsk-Slutsk and Pushkin collapsed.

Hitler was furious. He knew that time was working for the Soviet Union, not Germany. Overcoming immense difficulties, the Soviet Union was rallying the people, activating new armies, and massing powerful new resources. The summer and autumn campaign of the Nazis registered no substantial strategic success. Yet winter was drawing near, and the Nazi armies were unprepared for it.

In early October, our scouts reported that the Germans were building dugouts, fitting out bunkers and pillboxes for the winter, and laying mines and other obstacles to protect their battlelines. Our intelligence drew the conclusion that the enemy was preparing for the winter. And prisoners confirmed this. For the first time in many days we could tangibly feel that the Front had fulfilled its mission and had halted the Nazi offensive on Leningrad. The defence lines at the southern approaches to Leningrad were now more solid, and suffered no substantial change until January 1943. By that time, the positions of the two sides on the Svir river had solidified as well.

So what were the main results and peculiarities of the defensive stage of the Leningrad Battle in the autumn of 1941? And what were the reasons for the collapse of the Nazi offensive?

The politico-military importance of the successful defence of Leningrad was that it had botched the far-reaching designs of the Nazi Command. The tenacity and bold actions of the

armies of the Leningrad Front and of the Baltic Fleet wore out the enemy, bled him badly, and pinned him down in the northern part of Russia, thus denying Hitler the chance of shifting the mobile 4th Panzer Group to the Moscow area in time to be effective. When Operation Typhoon was launched, the 4th Panzer Group had not yet recovered, and was sent into the battle of Moscow in a depleted, weakened condition. This had substantially contributed to the successful defence of Moscow and the crushing defeat of the enemy at the approaches to the Soviet capital.

In September 1941, the situation in the Leningrad area was exceedingly complicated and changeable. The enemy engaged considerable panzer, motorized, and air forces, and compelled the Soviet Command to react swiftly and audaciously to the fluid situation, to improve its methods of warfare and troop control.

The September fighting at Leningrad was exceedingly tense and bitter. The enemy's strength was being worn down, while the resistance of the Soviet troops grew continuously stronger. Accordingly, the enemy's advance lost pace. In July he had advanced an average five kilometres daily, whereas in September it was no more than one or two kilometres, and this only in some sectors.

Thanks to the measures of the Front Command, a dependable, deeply echeloned and insurmountable line of defence had been put up at the northern, southern, and south-eastern approaches to Leningrad by the end of September. Suffice it to say that when we stabilized the situation on the Leningrad Front, our defences in the main sectors were of two lines. A rifle division with plenty of anti-tank weapons held a line of no more than ten to twelve kilometres.

Our defence had become invulnerable for we had put up a ramified system of fortifications, and because army and naval artillery was being put to good use. Important, too, was the effective cooperation between ground troops and the air force, as well as the dense, well-organized air defence of the city and the troops.

The victory in the defensive battles at the close approaches to Leningrad was attained by joint effort of all arms of the service, which relied on the heroic assistance of the city's

inhabitants. The common effort was spurred by the splendid morale of the Soviet troops, by their unbending faith in victory, their profound patriotism, and hatred of the fascist invaders.

The mass heroism and courage, the dedication in labour and battle shown by the defenders of Leningrad, is unexampled in the history of wars. And enormous credit for this goes to the Leningrad city and regional Party organizations for their skilled and efficient organizational work and the prestige they enjoyed among the city's inhabitants and the troops. Ten volunteer *opolcheniye* divisions were formed in Leningrad in the first three months of the war, as well as 16 separate artillery and machine-gun *opolcheniye* battalions. In addition, dozens of workers' detachments were activated to reinforce the *opolcheniye* units, not counting the many local anti-aircraft defence squads. Tens of thousands of medical nurses were trained, and a large number of hospitals was fitted out for the army. Other important measures were taken, too, to back up the fighting forces and assist the population.

In addition to *opolcheniye* units, the Leningrad regional and city Party committees, acting on the instructions of the Communist Party's Central Committee, formed some 400 partisan groups in 1941, totalling at least 14,000 effectives. These groups were sent to the Pskov, Gdov, Narva, Luga, and other areas. More than 12,000 Communists, the best of the best, responded to the Party's call and joined the troops of the Leningrad Front. Ten thousand became political workers. They inspired their mates by word and deed to do their duty to the country fearlessly.

Neither the heavy casualties nor the continuous, highly tense fighting, could break the spirit of the city's valorous defenders. Leningraders, soldiers and seamen, preferred to die rather than surrender the city.

It is hard to exaggerate the courage of the workers of Leningrad. They laboured with extraordinary dedication, going without food and sleep, under shelling and bombing. Considerable damage was done to the Kirov Plant, the Izhorsky Plant, the Russky Diesel Plant, the Bolshevik Factory, the Meat-Packing Plant, the Dubrovskaya power station, the

Admiralty Shipyards, the First of May Factory, and other large enterprises.

But despite the barbaric assault of the Nazi troops, the Leningrad workers did not leave their work places. Between July 1941 and the end of the year they produced 713 tanks, 480 armoured vehicles, 58 armoured trains, more than 3,000 regimental and anti-tank guns, nearly 10,000 mortars, over 3 million shells and mines, and more than 80,000 rocket projectiles and bombs. The munitions output increased ten times over in the latter half of 1941 as compared with the first six months of the year.

The remarkable thing was that a large portion of what Leningrad produced in October-December 1941 was flown out by air to our troops defending Moscow. In the last three months of 1941 alone, that is, at the very height of the Battle of Moscow, Leningraders sent the defenders of the capital more than 1,000 regimental guns and mortars.

At that time I was in command of the Western Front, fighting at the approaches to Moscow. I still remember how thrilled I was to learn of the help which Leningraders, those high-spirited men and women of great willpower who had already experienced hunger and privations, were rendering our Front.

Before the war Leningrad had a population of 3,103,000 and 3,385,000 counting the suburbs. As many as 1,743,129, including 414,148 children, were evacuated by decision of the Council of People's Commissars between June 29, 1941 and March 31, 1943.

Control over the fulfilment of the governmental decision was entrusted to A. N. Kosygin. And despite the hardships of the evacuation and the immense difficulty of "transplanting" vast numbers of people and huge amounts of equipment to the Volga area, the Urals, Siberia, Kazakhstan, and other parts of the country, the job was done in good time. Credit for this is due to the clever organizational work of Kosygin and those others whom the Party's Central Committee entrusted with what I should say was an exceedingly important mission.

The Party's Central Committee marshalled all resources and manpower to help the people of Leningrad. Cars and horses were used, along with all other possible modes of trans-

port, to deliver food, ammunition, clothing, and medical supplies across the ice of Lake Ladoga.

Lieutenant-General D. V. Pavlov earned all possible praise for delivering food to Leningraders and troops in a most complicated situation. Entrusted with this job by the State Defence Committee, he displayed great energy and inventiveness to supply the troops and to bring relief to the starving populace.

As for me, I consider it a great honour that in the darkest hour I was entrusted with commanding the troops that defended Leningrad. Organizing the struggle in a beleaguered city against an enemy considerably superior in numbers and arms yielded many a lesson that proved useful in all my later activity as commander of Fronts and Deputy Supreme Commander. September 1941 impregnated itself in my memory for life.

* * *

At the end of 1942 the situation on the various fronts improved. Thanks to the dedicated labour of the Soviet people and the enormous organizational effort of the Party, the Soviet armed forces were getting increasing amounts of first-class weaponry and equipment. Powerful Supreme Command reserves were being activated in the country's rear. The enemy, on the other hand, was gradually losing the superiority in arms and manpower that he had had at the beginning of the war.

The nature of the armed [illegible] too, had [illegible]ed substantially. Defeated in the B[illegible] [illegible]ingra[illegible] [illegible]erma-ny's armed forces had lost [illegible] and [illegible]elled to go over to strategic defe[illegible] ti[illegible] the Red Army.

and Kharkov. The enemy's High Command was forced to commit the bulk of its reserves in that area.

At the same time, our North-Western, Kalinin, and Western Fronts had gone on the offensive at Demyansk, Velikiye Luki, and Rzhev. To counter these operations and rescue their 16th Army trapped in the kettle at Demyansk, the German Army Group North command was forced to engage all its reserves and also rush in something like seven divisions from the Leningrad area.

To make the most of the favourable situation in the Leningrad area, the Soviet Supreme Command decided to mount an offensive operation in the Lake Ladoga sector and break the blockade of Leningrad. The operation was code-named Iskra (Spark).

And again the Mga-Schlüsselburg salient in the vicinity of Schlüsselburg-Siniavino was picked as the place for the breakthrough. For this we engaged the 67th Army (reinforced) of the Leningrad Front (Commander Lieutenant-General M. P. Dukhanov; P. A. Tyurkin, member of Military Council) and the 2nd Shock Army (reinforced) of the Volkhov Front (Commander Lieutenant-General V. Z. Romanovsky; General A. A. Kuznetsov, member of Military Council). The bulk of the 13th and 14th Air armies and part of the Baltic Fleet's and the Ladoga Flotilla's artillery were to support the action.

The specific tasks of the Leningrad and Volkhov Fronts were defined in a Stavka directive of December 8, 1942.

"The Volkhov and Leningrad Fronts," the directive read, "shall by joint effort crush the enemy group in the Lipka-Gaitolovo-Moskovskaya Dubrovka-Schlüsselburg area and thereby relieve the siege of Leningrad. The operation shall be completed by the end of January 1943.

"By consolidating the defences along the Moika river-Mikhailovsky-Tortolovo line, the Leningrad Front shall ensure stable communications. Thereupon, the troops shall be given a ten-day rest.

"In the early half of February 1943 an operation is to be prepared and carried out, smashing the enemy in the region of Mga, clearing the Kirov railway, and emerging along the Voronovo-Sigolovo-Voitolovo-Voskresensk line.

"On completing the Mga operation, the troops shall retire to winter quarters.

"The present order shall be forwarded to all commanders, including commanders of regiments.

"Confirm receipt. Report fulfilment.

"Supreme Command Stavka
"J. Stalin
"G. Zhukov

"Dec. 8, 1942.
"22:15 hours."

May the reader know that Operation Iskra was to be carried out in an exceedingly complicated situation. In the many months that they beleaguered Leningrad, the Nazi troops have turned their positions into powerful fortified zones with a ramified system of reinforced-concrete field installations, and a large number of anti-tank and anti-infantry obstacles. Furthermore, the enemy's defences ran along highly favourable terrain, various heights, and the like.

Especially strong were the defences along the left bank of the Neva. Solidly dug in, the Nazis here had before them a wide open surface of water up to 800 metres in width. Even though frozen, the river was still an exceedingly difficult obstacle because there was no cover at all on the ice. The enemy's visual command of it was complete, and he had every inch under fire from the steep bank 5 to 12 metres high at the point of the projected breakthrough. And the Germans had consolidated this natural obstacle with a dense network of barbed wire barriers and minefields.

In view of these fortifications, the breakthrough would call for an immense effort, great skill, and selfless bravery.

Though the Leningrad and Volkhov Front commands had submitted their operational plans, which had been closely examined by the General Staff and approved by the Stavka well in advance, Supreme Commander Stalin, aware of previous setbacks was worried about the outcome of Operation Iskra.

Throughout December 1942, the Fronts had painstakingly prepared for the offensive. The preparations were completed on January 1, 1943, the day fixed by the Stavka. But owing to the highly unfavourable weather — the warm weather had

dragged on and the ice on the Neva was not strong enough, while the swamps were still barely passable — it was dangerous to begin the operation. At the end of December, the commanders of the two Fronts asked the Stavka to postpone the jump-off until January 10-12, and their request was granted.

Early in January 1943, Stalin called me by phone at the Headquarters of the Voronezh Front, where I had gone to help prepare the Ostrogozhsk-Rossosh offensive. He came straight to the point:

"Voroshilov is in Leningrad as Stavka representative. The State Defence Committee thinks you, too, should go there. See at first hand if everything has been done for Operation Iskra to succeed. You still have time, so stop over in Moscow. There is something we must discuss with you".

Since the operation at Ostrogozhsk and Rossosh was also a most important element in the Stavka's strategic plan, I asked what I should do with the preparations for the offensive of the Voronezh Front.

"What do you suggest?" Stalin parried.

"Vasilevsky is in the swim, so let him complete the Voronezh job, and let Voronov complete the job in the Stalingrad area."

"Settled. Take off for Moscow at once."

In Stalin's office I met A. I. Shakhurin, People's Commissar of the Aviation Industry, and a group of aircraft designers. They were evidently ending a discussion of further improvements in the design of certain planes, and of increasing the production of bombers. Obviously, things were going well in this field, for Stalin was in high spirits.

"You may go," he said, putting an end to the discussion. "Go, and make things hum."

When the door closed behind them, Stalin said approvingly: "That's the sort of men the Party has reared..."

He turned to me and said there was still some time before Operation Iskra, and he wanted me to visit the 3rd Shock Army for a couple of days: it was wrestling with the enemy group surrounded in the Velikiye Luki-Novosokolniki-Porechye area.

"See how things are organized there," Stalin said.

I said I would fly there that day.

I mention this because the operation at Velikiye Luki and

the adjoining region was important for the breakthrough at Leningrad. The advancing Soviet troops there were drawing off considerable enemy forces from the Leningrad theatre and were thus contributing to the success of Operation Iskra. As Deputy Supreme Commander, I was constantly briefed by the General Staff on the situation in all sectors, and knew the Velikiye Luki operation thoroughly.

On the spot, I examined the actions of the 8th Estonian Corps which was then under the command of a most experienced and energetic Estonian, Major-General L. A. Pern. Then I visited the 5th Guards Corps under General of the Army A. P. Beloborodov, one of our most prominent and hard-working military leaders, who is now twice Hero of the Soviet Union.

Alexander Kronik, who had been sergeant-major in the squadron I had commanded in 1922, was in command of the 357th Rifle Division. It was a pleasure meeting an old buddy, but I was doubly pleased after I had acquainted myself in detail with the showing of his division, for it was faultless.

The 3rd Shock Army was doing well. And its commanding officer, General K. N. Galitsky, and member of the Military Council, A. I. Litvinov, made a good impression on me. I told Stalin as much, and left for the Volkhov Front with his "blessings" in the early hours of January 9.

...We Stavka representatives did not often get the chance of travelling by rail. Usually we flew in all haste to assigned theatres of operations. So when I found myself in a comfortable, warm railway compartment, I left orders not to disturb me and went to bed. This was my last opportunity to rest up before the job at hand, which would begin the moment I arrived.

I was awakened by the train's suddenly losing speed. It was dark outside. Not a light anywhere. It was close to 2 a. m.

I got up quickly and dressed. The train stopped. The duty general came to the door of my compartment and announced that Comrades Voroshilov and Zhdanov had come from Leningrad and were expecting me in their car.

I went there instantly. The commanders of the Leningrad and Volkhov Fronts and members of their Military Councils were gathered in Voroshilov's railway car.

LENINGRAD BLOCKADE BROKEN

(January 1943)

Front line by the evening of Jan 11 1943

Position of Soviet troops by the evening of Jan 12 1943

Position of Soviet troops by the evening of Jan 17, 1943

Position of Soviet troops at the end of January 1943

Soviet offensive

Counter-attacks and withdrawal of enemy troops

Enemy defence line

Advance and redeployment of troops



Voroshilov and Zhdanov greeted me warmly.

"Stalin called and said you were coming," Voroshilov said.

I replied that I was ready to take up my duties at once. We discussed various aspects of Operation Iskra without further delay.

As always, we started by defining the objectives, then examined the plan of the coming action. The Stavka had issued directives to the Leningrad and Volkhov Fronts on December 8, 1942, ordering them to crush the Nazi group in the Lipka-Gaitolovo-Moskovskaya Dubrovka-Schlüsselburg area and breach the blockade there.

The plan was simple: two shock groups — one of the Volkhov and the other of the Leningrad Front — would hit out in converging directions towards Rabochy Posyolok No.5 (5 kilometres north of Siniavino) and split the enemy's defence line in the Schlüsselburg-Mga salient. Auxiliary strikes were planned in other sectors north and south of the main blow, so as to deny the enemy any chance of moving his manpower and weaponry.

Let me confess that I was thrilled to see familiar place names reminding me of September 1941 on our operational maps. Moskovskaya Dubrovka! Here our men were still heroically clinging to a bridgehead — a tiny strip of land retaken in the first months of the blockade. Now, however, one of the auxiliary strikes to be delivered by the Leningrad Front would cross that strip.

Changes had occurred in other sectors. Not just a division was now advancing from Leningrad, as was the case in 1941, but a whole army, the 67th, under General M. P. Dukhanov. It included a number of divisions that had distinguished themselves in previous battles — General N. P. Simonyak's 136th which had once defended Hanko peninsula, General A. A. Krasnov's 45th Guards Division, and Colonel V. A. Trubachev's 86th. The artillery and aviation of the Baltic Fleet, S. D. Rybalchenko's 13th Air Army, and units of the Ladoga Flotilla's artillery were also committed in the operation.

General V. Z. Romanovsky's 2nd Shock Army was assigned the chief mission on the Volkhov Front, while elements of General F. N. Starikov's 8th Army were to advance in an auxiliary direction south of Gaitolovo. That's where I would work two days before the operation, since Voroshilov was going back to Leningrad to coordinate the actions of Leningrad Front troops. The operation of the Volkhov Front would be supported from the air by General I. P. Zhuravlyov's 14th Air Army.

Reviewing the operational plans, we decided to make a few alterations, especially as concerned the artillery offensive.

When our conference was over, Voroshilov, Govorov and Zhdanov left for Leningrad, while I got down to work on the spot. I had a talk with K. A. Meretskov, Commander of the Volkhov Front, L. Z. Mekhlis, member of the Military Council,

General M. N. Sharokhin, Chief of Staff, and General G. E. Degtyaryov, who was in command of the Front's artillery.

I met the commanders of the armies. To begin with, I examined their blueprint of the operation. Then I looked into the logistics, and made a detailed study of the plan of the coming battle with the commander of the 128th Rifle Division, General F. N. Parkhomenko, who would operate on the right flank of the main effort.

I ended each day of my stay on the Volkhov Front with a detailed situation report to the Stavka. I briefed the Supreme Command on whatever I had done to rectify faults, and offered suggestions on matters that would be handled by the General Staff and other central agencies. Let me cite just one such situation report addressed to the Supreme Commander after my first day's stay on the Volkhov Front.

"To Comrade Vasilyev
[Stalin's code name at
the time — *G. Zh.*]

"Visited Romanovsky's and Starikov's command posts today, and looked into the situation and their decisions. Also, I looked into the situation and his breakthrough plan with the commander of the 128th Rifle Division.

"The main faults in decisions and logistics, as I see them, are:

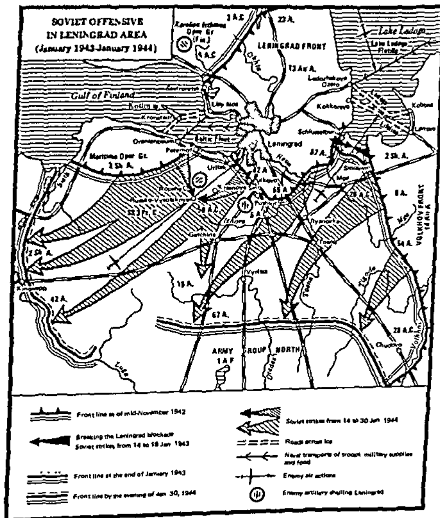
"1. The divisions advancing in the general direction of Rabochy Posyolok No.8 bypassing the enemy at Siniavino, have no tanks; too few guns are massed against the stronghold in Rabochy Posyolok No.8. There is no guarantee of a successful breakthrough due to the absence of tanks and shortage of guns.

"2. Cooperation at the junctions between armies, formations and units, has not been worked out well enough.

"3. The disposition of divisional reserves in the order of battle is too close; in substance, the reserves are like second echelons. The distance of 1-1.5 kilometres from the first echelon could result in big losses.

"Besides, there are a number of minor tactical and technical flaws.

"I have issued explicit instructions on all spotted faults to




Afanasiev [Meretskov's code name at that time — *G. Zh.*] and the commanders of armies.

"Considering the terrain, Afanasiev has very poor artillery observation, and this will deteriorate still more as our troops advance across forest land. To avoid wasting shells and mines, we must urgently give the Front a unit of observation balloons and one or two flights of spotting aircraft.

"For the second stage of the operation, the Volkhov Front must have the following additional amounts of ammunition: 20,000 122-mm howitzer shells; 15,000 152-mm cannon-howitzer shells; 60,000 120-mm mines; 150,000 M-3[illegible] 3,000

M-20 shells, and 3,500 M-13 shells. This ammunition must be delivered between the 18th and 20th of January, 1943.

"I will be with the divisions from the morning of January 11. Yefremov [Voroshilov's code name — *G. Zh.*] is at Leonidov's [Govorov's code name].

"January 11, 1943, 02:00 hours.

"Konstantinov [Zhukov's code name — *G. Zh.*]."

All preparations for the operation were at last completed. The morning of January 12, 1943, was clear and frosty. General Romanovsky and I came to the 2nd Shock Army's observation post. It was quite near the front lines, and we had a good view of the enemy's defences in immediate depth. Columns of smoke rose here and there in the midst of the German positions. Soldiers who had been on guard duty at night when our scouts were usually active were now about to go to sleep and were lighting their stoves.

So far, silence reigned. But it was a special silence to me — the silence before an attack of historical dimensions.

In the battle, we managed to achieve a tactical surprise, though the enemy knew we were preparing to break the blockade. He may even have guessed where the Soviet troops would hit, for the shape of the front was suggestive of it. And day after day the Germans were building fortifications in the sector of the breakthrough, moving in their crack units, installing more and more guns in the bunkers built during the more than 16 months of the blockade. But when exactly we would strike, on what day and hour, and with what force, the German Command did not know.

As we learned later from prisoners, the Soviet assault which the Nazis had awaited for all of a year, came as a complete surprise to them that day, especially for its power and skill.

The first artillery salvo broke the glacial morning silence at 09:30 hours sharp. Thousands of guns and mortars of the two Fronts sounded off simultaneously from the western and eastern sides of the enemy's Schlüsselburg-Mga corridor.

The hurricane of fire raged for two hours over the enemy's positions in the Soviet army's sectors of the main and auxiliary efforts. The bombardment blended into a single, powerful roar, and it was hard to tell who was firing and from where.

Black fountains of earth rose in front of us, trees shook and fell, the logs of enemy bunkers flew up into the air like matches. Here and there, small grey clouds — the vapour from swamps turned up by the shells — rose and settled quickly in the frost. Two or three gun or mortar shells burst on each square metre of the sector where we planned the breakthrough.

The well-prepared attack yielded the desired results. Grinding down the enemy's resistance, crashing through his defences, the shock troops of the two Fronts were hewing their way forward — not without difficulty, of course — from west and east on a meeting course.

The ferocious fighting in the deep of the Nazi defences went on for seven days and nights without let-up. The Nazi troops fought obdurately for every little height, every little wood, every cluster of houses. But their resistance was finally worn down by the joint effort of all arms of the service, which cooperated most effectively with each other.

As a result of the offensive, our troops captured Schlüsselburg and a number of other points which the Nazis had turned into mighty centres of resistance. On January 18, the advancing units of the two Fronts made contact at last in the area of Rabochy Posyolok No. 5 and Rabochy Posyolok No. 1. The siege of Leningrad was lifted.

As the operation unfolded, the observation post of the Commander of the 2nd Shock Army, where we had gathered, was moved to the area of Rabochy Posyolok No. 1. I saw how the men of the two fronts who had breached the blockade, ran to meet each other joyfully. They paid no attention to the enemy shells from the Siniavino heights, shaking hands, laughing, hugging each other. Truly, it was a dearly paid for jubilation.

The lifting of the Leningrad siege was an important politico-military event.

On January 18, the day the blockade was broken, I was made Marshal of the Soviet Union. On January 20, Voroshilov and I went to Leningrad. We were deeply touched that no one had complained about the privations of the siege during our meetings and conversations with the inhabitants. There was only one topic on everybody's lips: how to organize delivery to Leningrad of the machinery to make and repair weapons

needed by the army. It was evidence of the strength and power of the Soviet people brought up by Lenin's Party — a people that no enemy can defeat.

The ordeal that had befallen the Leningraders was something that probably none but the Soviet people could have withstood. Leningrad's inhabitants displayed unexampled courage and endurance. Remembering this, we who have survived, bend our heads in deep reverence to the memory of those who gave up their lives for the city of Lenin, for the Soviet homeland, for the future of our children...

Among the many events that I witnessed during the breaking of the Leningrad blockade, I recall something that may be of interest to everyone.

It was January 14, 1943. We at the command post were told that between Rabochy Posyolok No. 5 and Rabochy Posyolok No. 6 our gunners had hit a panzer which looked different from the types of tanks we knew. The Nazis, we were told, were trying very hard to drag it away from the "neutral zone."

The story struck us as interesting, and we had a special group formed, consisting of an infantry platoon and four tanks, to capture the enemy panzer and tow it to our positions. There it was to be thoroughly examined. The group was supported by a powerful gun and mortar shelling.

In the early morning of January 17, the group under Senior Lieutenant Kosarev went over the top. The enemy kept the place under constant fire. But our men managed to tow the panzer home. They even brought its log, which they found in the snow nearby.

The vehicle turned out to be of unusual design. We discovered that it was the first experimental specimen of a new heavy panzer called Tiger, which the Nazi command was testing on the Volkhov Front. It was subjected to a thorough examination. Experiments revealed its most vulnerable points. The results were at once circulated among all Soviet troops. That is why our tankmen and gunners did not falter when the Germans first used Tigers *en masse* in the Stalingrad and Kursk battles.

*The Siege of Leningrad* appeared in Britain in 1969. On the face of it, it is a thorough piece of work, with the facts and figures given with references to sources, the list of which alone occupies 14 pages of small type. The nearly 500 items listed in the bibliography include 230 books by Soviet authors and as many as 192 references to articles in our periodical press.

A closer acquaintance with the book, however, shows it to be partial and prejudiced. Its anti-Soviet tenor is obvious. The author picked out and described the most sombre, painful, and negative facts and episodes. One gets the impression that the sacrifices of the Leningraders and the troops of the Leningrad Front for the sake of victory had been senseless and unnecessary. In effect, the book says little or nothing of the victory. Nor does it say anything about the impact that the heroic 900-day defence of Lenin's city made on the course of the war in general.

Mr. Salisbury presents well-known facts borrowed from published Soviet sources to the Western reader with the air of a discoverer. As a result, the uninformed may get the impression that he is the first to describe the suffering caused by the blockade, the first to name the number of dead, etc.

Mr. Salisbury sets out the information about the casualties with an extraordinary lack of integrity. He maintains, for example, that the Soviet leadership is deliberately minimizing the number of those who had died of starvation.

Here he is wilfully misleading his readers. We have never held back the number of victims of Nazi crimes. Nor will we ever forget them. Right after the war, of course, it had been difficult to count all the casualties. During that terrible winter of 1941/1942 there simply wasn't anyone to register those who died of hunger. But in due course the Extraordinary State Commission for establishing and investigating the misdeeds of the Nazi invaders determined that nearly 642,000 people had died of hunger during the blockade of Leningrad, and about 21,000 were killed in Nazi air-raids and artillery bombardments.

So, where is Mr. Salisbury's "discovery"? Is it not obvious that his glib talk about falsified and true losses in Leningrad aren't worth a rap?

Writers, Salisbury included, cannot alter the facts of history.

The grandeur of the Lenigraders' exploit reflects the lofty Soviet code of morals, the courage, endurance and tenacity of Soviet people, their fidelity to the ideals of socialism, and the superiority of our warcraft over that of Hitler's Wehrmacht. Those who do not acknowledge this axiom will never understand, nor be able to explain, the course of the Second World War as a whole, and the key, historical battles, such as that for Leningrad.

Much has been written about the heroic defence of Leningrad. Still, it seems to me that much more should be said about it and about all the other Soviet hero cities. It would be a good idea to put out a special series of epic books, richly illustrated and beautifully published, containing strictly documentary material written up sincerely and truthfully.

I think every Soviet citizen would find a good place for such a book on his bookshelf. Let our young people know about the shot-up streets and lanes of the past war, the fire-blackened ruins, the upturned land from which Soviet men and women — their grandfathers, fathers and mothers — expelled the savage enemy. Let them see it all behind the new housing developments, the squares and avenues of present-day Soviet cities. This will be best done while the witnesses and veterans of those heroic times are still alive.

Though it is only right that the signs of war and destruction should be removed as quickly as possible from the face of the earth so as not to distress the living, it is equally right that the image and spirit of those heroic war days should be passed down to the succeeding generations.

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Редакторы русского текста
*Б. Г Забелок, А. В. Логинова*

Контрольный редактор
*Л. А. Романова*

Художник
*А. Е Смирнов*

Художественный редактор
*И М. Чернышова*

Технический редактор
*Н. И. Касаткина*